

OK
CHÖGYAL NAMKHAI NORBU

THE PRECIOUS VASE

Instructions on the foundation level
of the *Santi Maha Sangha* training.

rMang gZhi'i Khrid
Rin chen Bum bZang.

Translated from Tibetan into Italian
with added commentary
by
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and translated
from Italian into English
by
John Shane.

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Publisher's Note:

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche wrote this text in 1992 as the basis of the study and practice of *Sant'i Maha Sangha*. He later compiled a shorter version which has been translated and published by Shang-Shung Editions with the title *The Wish Fulfilling Vase*.

The present text, originally written in Tibetan, was translated orally and recorded on tape by Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche himself and then transcribed by a number of practitioners. The transcription was then edited by Donatella Rossi, whose difficult task was to render the text as uniform and flowing as possible. The reader should therefore be aware that the present book is not a literal translation of the original Tibetan text.

All errors and omissions relating to the editing of the present text are exclusively the responsibility of the editors.

The numbers found in the text (on the right hand side of the page) correspond to the pages of the original Tibetan and are included to enable the reader to find the answers to the examination questions relating to this book, which are to be found in the second part of the book *Examination Questions*, together with those relating to the shorter text *The Wish Fulfilling Vase*.

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Foreword.

These pages contain the text called *Rin chen bum bzang* which I have here translated orally, adding an explanation of the points that are not clear, and indicating such points with the word "commentary" (the commentary is naturally not part of the text itself and is printed in brackets).

When one translates orally one cannot always find the exact corresponding term for some words, and for this reason, in some cases, the literal meaning alone is adhered to. At a later date we will try to find more suitable and correct terms for such words.

This text, which I wrote this year (1992), should be understood to be the preparatory Base (or foundation for the *Santi Maha Sangha* training) and is inspired by the four verses of the *Santi Maha Sangha* root text which present the preparatory Base and the way in which it should be applied.

After having studied and prepared oneself (in the material contained in) this foundation level in a precise way, both in theory and in practice, one can begin to train oneself in the first level. Besides that training, the knowledge and understanding of this foundation level is indispensable for whoever wants to follow the *rDzogs chen* teaching.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu.

Note to the English Translation.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has indicated that the aim of the *Santi Maha Sangha* programme is to create a sound basis for the future continuation of the profound Teachings of which he is lineage holder, by providing dedicated students with a precise and complete training in nine levels of teaching (in addition to the Foundation Level contained in this book and *The Wish Fulfilling Vase*) that will present the whole spiritual path of *rDzogs chen*.

Rinpoche has expressed his intention to teach one level of the *Santi Maha Sangha* training each year, and has indicated that the possibility to study and practise each further level will be restricted to those who fulfill the qualifications established by him, which will include satisfying him that they have integrated the study and practise of the preceding level into their lives, beginning with the material presented in the two Foundation Level texts.

It has been my great privilege to translate from Italian into English both the present text, *The Precious Vase*, and the parallel text, *The Wish Fulfilling Jewel*, his abridged version of the same material, which was translated from Tibetan into Italian by Adriano Clemente. Although reading either of the books separately will undoubtedly be beneficial, to study both *The Wish Fulfilling Jewel*, and *The Precious Vase* together will have many advantages.

As Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has himself pointed out in his Foreword above, the oral translation he has made of *The Precious Vase* from Tibetan into Italian, from which this present English translation has been made, is a provisional one. We are very fortunate indeed to have access to Rinpoche's recorded oral presentation of this material in this way. The rendering of a provisional Italian version into English has, however, presented occasional difficulties beyond those that are usually encountered in making a second translation of this kind, particularly in those sections of the text where, as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu states in his Foreword, he has rendered 'the literal meaning alone' into Italian. If these few passages, generally dealing with material of a very profound nature, remain difficult in this English translation it is because, in order to avoid putting any interpretation of my own onto the material where its meaning really is not clear, awaiting Rinpoche's clarification, I have preferred to follow the Italian in the English version as closely as I can, translating it word for word. These sections are few and far between, however, and the reader will find *The Precious Vase*, even in the form of a provisional translation, to be overflowing with the clarity of the vast scholarship and deep insight of its illustrious Author, and with the inspiration of the many compassionate Masters whose profound words of wisdom he quotes in these pages to provide us with a guide to entering the Path.

I offer this translation with the sincere wish that it may be of service, and with the prayer that it may help to bring the confusion and suffering of all the beings of the six *Lokas* to an end in the space and clarity of the true state of knowledge.

J.S. 1993.

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Santi Maha Sangha rMang gZhi'i Kbrid
Rin chen Bum bZang
Instructions on the Foundation Level
of Santi Maha Sangha known as 'The Precious Vase'.

1

(The Precious Vase is one of the eight auspicious symbols, and it contains everything and accomplishes whatever one desires. This is the explanation of the title of this text.)

2

I pay homage the Drin chen Masters!

(Masters who have been of great help and who have shown great kindness and loving-kindness, such as a father or mother would towards their own son, are referred to with the term Drin chen).

I pay homage to the Masters who have shown great kindness and are the essence of the letter OM.

(In the *gSang ba snying po* and in the text by Padmasambhava *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, the *Necklace of the View and the Essential Methods*, the following explanation is given:

"The letter OM represents the three dimensions: the *Dharmakaya*, the *Sambhogakaya* and the *Nirmanakaya*. The (component) letter A represents the *Nirmanakaya*, while the (component) vowel O represents the *Sambhogakaya*, which has no material body: it is pure energy which transforms this word in sound. If there was no O, it would become an A. The circle above the letter (which corresponds to the final 'M') represents the *Dharmakaya*. In general when one speaks of the three Vajras, OM refers to the Vajra of the body").

With the intention of benefiting practitioners who are on the path I will show the Precious Vase of Perfectioning. I ask permission of the Ocean of *Dakinis* and Protectors of the Teaching.

3

OM A HUM A

Chapter One

The Foundation level of the *Santi Maha Sangha* Teaching.

If one wants to build a high and elegant house, one must first of all construct a good and stable foundation. In the same way, to enter into the path of the sacred Teaching, the path of primordial knowledge, which is (a) profound and rapid (means) for realization, one must first of all build a perfect foundation, so as to be able to cause the sacred knowledge of the Teaching to arise in one's own state. This is a very important and indispensable necessity to which the following verses of the *Santi Maha Sangha* text (that begin in Tibetan) "*rDzogs sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa mdo dang snags*" etc., refer:

"The teaching of the totally perfected Buddha
is contained in the *Sutras* and the *Tantras*.

The essence of all these teachings and of those related to them
(such as the teaching and the practice of the *gCod*)
is the teaching of the state of Samantabhadra.

The basis of the Teaching consists in personally learning, applying, and
experiencing in a complete way the Great Perfection, *rDzogs pa chen po*,
with all its related *Tantras*, *Lungs*, and *Upadesas*, as well as *Yantra Yoga*'.

(The example of nectar is used to explain this point: just as a clean and perfect container is needed in order that nectar should not be ruined or wasted, in the same way, to receive the Teaching, one must have a precise foundation. When there is such a foundation, a result can be obtained, just as a field can only make things grow after it has been sown with seed.)

4

These four verses point out the foundation (literally: base, or basis) of the Teaching. What exactly is meant by the expression 'The Teaching of the totally perfected Buddha?' For an explanation of this topic one should refer to the text *Mam ngag lta ba'i phreng pa*, *The Necklace of the Way of Seeing of the Essential Methods*, written by Guru Padmasambhava, which sets out various theoretical views, both non-Buddhist and those relating to the *Sutras*, to the *Tantras*, and to *rDzogs chen*:

"There are in the world innumerable erroneous ways of seeing which sentient beings hold true that can be summarized in four categories: *phyal bas*; *rgyang 'phen bas*; *mar thur thug pas*, and *mu stegs pas*.

The followers of the first mistaken way of seeing do not understand and are ignorant of the principle of the causality of all phenomena (cause and effect).

The (followers of the) second (group) do not accept the existence of past and future lives. They concentrate only on the present life and in order to gain riches, power and so on, they follow the use of certain worldly secret formulas¹.

5

The third do not accept the (principle of) the causation of all phenomena and consequently they consider all phenomena to have arisen by chance, and to have only one single existence, after which everything ceases to be.

The fourth, through reasoning and the examination of all phenomena, establish and affirm the existence of an eternal 'I' (or 'self').

These erroneous ways of seeing, so called because they are ignorant of the truth, include ways of seeing that are ignorant of the (principle of) the causation of phenomena, or which confirm the existence of a fruit (or effect) but not of a cause², or which interpret the principle of cause and effect in a wrong (literally: contrary)

manner³ or which confirm the existence of a cause but not of an effect⁴ (these are also called the mundane (or worldly) ways of seeing, or the mundane paths).

The supra-mundane way or path has two forms: the Analytical Vehicle (or the vehicle of the *Sutras*) and the Vehicle of the *Vajrayana* (as is explained in the text, the expression 'supra-mundane' indicates the Path).

What, in practice, is the difference between the mundane and the supra-mundane paths?

6

To reply to this question one can examine the text known as *Shes bya kun khyab* (a text in three volumes written by 'Jam mgon kong sprul Rinpoche; the quotation that follows is to be found in the second volume):

"As far as the way of seeing of those who follow a given *grub mtha'* (by *grub mtha'* what is meant is the analysis and the study of a way of seeing confirmed in writing which becomes the stream (of thought) of a school), some accept and others reject the four *mudras* of the *bKa'*. *bKa'* is the word of Buddha (in this case *mudra* is not to be understood as it is in *Tantrism*, but rather as the sign or symbol of the word of the Buddha, of the real meaning.)

As regards the meditation or application some consider it to be the antidote to the 'realization of the peak of existence' and others do not (the peak of existence means that although different types of realization exist, even at the highest level one does not go beyond the three worlds and still remains in *Samsara*. Someone who follows a correct path on the other hand must go completely beyond existence).

As far as the attitude is concerned, some accept the practice of renunciation and others do not. In either case there are two limits: the limit of the ascetic discipline, and the limit of the desire of whosoever wishes to achieve a good position, to be rich, elegant and so on.

As far as the fruit is concerned, some accept and some reject the truth of the Path which is the truth of the cessation of *Samsara*, the cessation of the level of the three worlds, beyond which there is nothing in particular to be accepted or rejected.

(To summarize, with regard to the View, one either accepts or does not accept the four *mudras*; with regard to the application (or meditation), one considers it either to be or not to be an antidote to worldly realizations; with regard to the behaviour, one does not fall into either of the two limits of sacrifice (ascetic discipline) or desire; with regard to the fruit, one either accepts or does not accept the path of definitive cessation).

In the text *'Dul ba 'od ldan* (*The Luminous Discipline*) one reads:

'Demonstrating (in oneself) clearly the three trainings⁵ (which are those of morality, of *Samadhi* or contemplation, and of *Prajña*), and possessing in a pure way the condition of the four *mudras*, one maintains virtue at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Thus the wise understand the word (*bKa'*) of the Buddha'.

The four *mudras* are like the conclusion or the summary of all the *dharmas*.

The text called *gSang ba bsam gyis mt khyab pa* (*Infinite Secrets*) states:

7

The Buddha *Tathagata* summed up (the nature of) all phenomena in the following four conclusions:

- 1) all aggregates (compounded things) are impermanent;
- 2) everything that has a material level is suffering;
- 3) all phenomena are without (inherent) self-nature

(this is a phrase much used in the *Hinayana* which has the same meaning as *Shunyata*, Voidness, the Voidness of the absolute, in the *Mahayana*. It means that the inherent nature of all *dharmas* or phenomena is absolute voidness, and that nothing ultimately has any concrete existence);

- 4) Nirvana, or the opposite of suffering, is peace.'

(A teaching can be considered to be the perfect word of the Buddha only when it includes all the above mentioned four *mudras*; otherwise it cannot be considered to be the perfect word of the Buddha.)

(The following quotations are in the form of questions and answers).

'Speaking of the *gNas ma bu pa* (*Vatsiputriya*) (for a certain period of time there existed eighteen streams of ways of seeing in the *Hinayana*, which, although they showed great respect for the Buddhist Teaching, retained certain Hindu tendencies. One of these was called the way of seeing of the *gNas ma bu pa*, and it is said that they consider the ego, the I, to be a non-impermanent aggregate which is not destroyed by time (they do not call it 'immortal' in order not to use a term that would reflect a Hindu influence. To respect the Buddhist teaching of the four *Mudras* in which it is said that all aggregates are impermanent, speaking of the I, they affirm that it is an aggregate, but they also affirm, however, that it is not destroyed with time). Isn't this a contradiction? They neither accept nor confirm something permanent beyond the aggregate (that is to say they do not consider that which is beyond the aggregate to be immortal). They do not accept the existence of something immortal which cannot be definitively destroyed; and therefore their vision is quite different from the mistaken path of the *Mu stegs pa*. The mistaken path of the *Mu stegs pa* does not include what is defined as the 'antidote to the peak of existence'; they are contrary to the Path, to the form (of the Path) that adheres to the truth of the absence of an independent self (the *Mu stegs pa* do not understand the interdependence of phenomena, they accept the ego and are thus contrary to the correct understanding). Beyond this they do not believe in the existence of a further realization.

8

As the Master dPa' bo (an Indian master, who was a great scholar of Hinduism who later converted to Buddhism and who was the author of many texts) said:

'Individuals who are blinded by ignorance do not follow Your Teaching (that is to say the teaching of the Buddha), and even if they reach the level of the peak of existence, they continue to live in the suffering which generates existence. Those who follow Your Teaching, even if they do not realize the true state of contemplation because of the hindrances which are like a covering over their eyes, succeed in overcoming or reversing attachments.

(Having a covering over one's eyes means that there are obstacles, that the clarity necessary to find oneself in one's own knowledge of the state of contemplation is lacking; it means also being attached to worldly things). The defect in one's attitude in such a case is that of falling into the two limits of attachment to gain and to honours, limits which cause dissatisfaction in relation to quantity and quality, as they seem less than expected. If, on the other hand, a person has perfect morality, a certain knowledge of the interdependence of phenomena and a pure way of seeing which liberates the individual from the concept of gross material considerations, such a person, since he or she does not have great attachment, is not considered to have a defect (even) if in practising he or she feels a little enjoyment of the abundance of good things.

9

But when attachment to gain and honours generates suffering in the body and the mind, it comes into the category of those who follow the *rgyang 'phenpa* school and the *gcer bu pa* school (two of the four worldly schools which were spoken of earlier: *gcer bu pa* means naked). The Lord (Bhagwan) Buddha has taught and said repeatedly that one needs to train oneself and to learn not to fall into the two limits with regard to clothing, to food, to the place in which one lives, to health, or medicine for one's own body and so on (by the two limits are meant the worldly path - that is to say the search for riches, power,

pleasure, etc., - and the ascetic path of sacrifice. The Buddha stated that one should not fall into the limits of these two positions).

As regards the fruit of liberation, the text *bShes spring* states:

'A person should seek to obtain realization

beyond the elements earth, water, fire, air, sun and moon'.

(The *bShes spring* is a text that was written by Nagarjuna for his father in the form of advice to him. What is meant here is that one should not be erroneously dependent or conditioned, as happens for example in some mistaken schools that regard the sun as a god). As is said in the text, the *rgyang 'phen pas* consider the four elements to be connected to the mind; one who overcomes this condition liberates him or herself; they consider this to be like Samsara and Nirvana; thus realization and the four elements have the same basis⁶. On this point the *Khad par 'phas bstod*⁷ states:

'A parrot that has arrived in the sun discovers that liberation exists'; here too the sun and the moon are mistakenly regarded to be the state of liberation; or, according to the *gcer bu pa*,

10

liberation is like an umbrella which is to be found in the dimension of the sky. All these concepts of liberation are false and are ignorant of the path of realization. According to the teaching of the Victorious (Buddha), liberation or that which is called Nirvana is 'beyond suffering', it is the truth of the cessation of suffering. Those who follow this principle follow a Path which is superior to mistaken paths, a Path through which one can obtain both provisional and definitive benefits. Therefore the definitive path for total realization is that of the Teaching of the Victorious One".

Such is the Path which must be followed, the Path that is worthy of being followed by those who wish to really arrive at a definitive realization or liberation.

Chapter Two

The Six Preliminary Teachings

In what way should one enter into this Path and follow it until one arrives at a definitive benefit valid for oneself and others?

11

It is stated in the *Man ngag mdzod* (one of the seven *mdzod*, or treasures - written by Klong chen pa, a great Master of *rDzogs chen*, with the aim of providing advice on how to practise and follow the Path - in which the way to enter and proceed on the Path is explained):

"First of all, to enter into the Path, there are three trainings, which are the basis of the Path itself, and six principle points. The first of the six principle points is study and reasoning. One should think through, without limits, the various topics of study, seeking to maintain one's three existences in a calm state. Through this one loosens up one's character and develops humility. The second (point) is that one should avoid creating negative actions which could be hindrances to realization; the third (point) is that one should develop virtuous action as much as possible; the fourth and the fifth points are that one should respect morality and strengthen one's devotion towards the Teaching and the state of knowledge. Lastly, (the sixth point is that) one places one's trust in a Master who guides one on the Path and on the virtuous companions who are on the Path. These are very important aspects for someone who is beginning to follow the path of the Teaching of the Buddha".

For beginners who enter into the Path of the Teaching of the totally perfected Buddha these six principle points are therefore indispensable (the six points of the Master Klong chenpa will be explained singly later on. What follows here concerns the three trainings).

Practising the three trainings that are the foundation of the path

As has been said, the basis of the Path implies following the three trainings; these are always observed when one enters into the Path of the precious Teaching of the perfectly enlightened Buddha. The three trainings make up the fulcrum of the teachings pertaining to the Analytical Path of the Cause set out in the *Sutras*, a Sanskrit term which in Tibetan is rendered as *mdo*, understood with the meaning of 'that which corrects and gives salvation' (*'chos skyob*).

12

The first training is that of morality, *Tshul khrims*. In this case what is meant is not something obligatory, but something which one follows with awareness understanding its principle, the reason for it, and the benefit of it. The second training is that of *Samadhi*, of contemplation, and the third is the training in *Prajña*, (in which) through reasoning one comes to a precise understanding and overcomes all doubts; through practice one (then) integrates this experience into one's own condition. (In this text by Klong chen pa, describing the Path or the Vehicle of the Cause, both the View and the Behaviour of the *Bodhisattva* are explained ; anyone who is interested in this can learn and train themselves well (in them)).

Studying without limits the various fields of knowledge

13

(The first of the six principle points of Klong chen pa: studying and reasoning without limits in the various fields of study).

In the *sPod Jug (Bodhisattvacaryavatara)* (a text written by Santideva, recognized by practitioners of the *Mahayana* as the basis of all the practices and trainings on the path of the *Bodhisattva*) one reads:

"There is nothing which the sons of the Buddha (the *Bodhisattvas*) do not learn, or in which they do not train; there is nothing which does not become merit for those who are wise enough to live basing themselves of this principle".

(This means that everything can become useful, that one can learn from everything, and that everything can be used in a correct way and can become positive). There are many things to learn and concerning which one should reason; one can work without limits according to the circumstances, according to necessity and according to the moment. There are things which bring benefit to the Teachings and to sentient beings in a direct and an indirect way; whatever they are, they can be useful and be the cause of creating merits; this is the true meaning of the preceding quotation. In harmony with this principle, it is also said in the *rDzogs chen Upadesa* that, to arrive at knowledge of one's own state, one tries the tastes of all teachings like a bee, trying everything without limits.

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This means that a person who finds themselves on the path should taste and experience the flavour of the teachings which permit one to realize the meaning in one's own state, and as if they were a bee they will follow and reason on their meaning without limiting him or herself, until he or she has realized this state of knowledge. Naturally this does not mean flying around everywhere like a bee just to listen and reason until one's life is completely over. On this point the text known as *bSam gtan mig sgron* (a very famous text written by gNubs sangs rgyas yeshe which contains an explanation of the principle of the *Sutras*, the *Tantras* and of *rDzogs chen* to show the difference between them) states:

"The first fundamental thing is to listen to and to follow the Teaching. But if in listening and studying one does not use one's own intelligence, one is like a person who seeks gold in the dark without a lamp. (This is a quotation of which the origin is not clearly known; it could come from a *Tantra*). Just as to look for gold in the dark one uses a lamp, in the same way one uses one's mind to arrive at the great meaning, the real sense. (That is to say through the mind one reaches the knowledge of the nature of the mind)".

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Just as a lamp (is necessary to lighten the darkness), so too words and writings are necessary for practice (or application), meditation and contemplation. This principle is explained repeatedly in the *Sutras* and also in the Inner *Tantras*.

The *Rin chen rgya mtsho*⁸ (Ocean of the Precious Ones) states:

"From the syllable TRAM; it is necessary to hear the total and supreme secret".

(This means that one should receive the transmission from the Master listening and realizing its meaning). There are many examples similar to this, even in other systems such as the *Upadesa*. The *rTse mo Byung rGya*⁹ (one of the original texts of the *rDzogs chen Sems sde*) states:

"The name and the words are like a lamp, the meaning is like gold; the different words, the explanations, are like the wheel of the voice".

(That is to say, the state of knowledge is transmitted through explanations). The meaning must therefore be sought in the above mentioned way. The understanding of the real meaning, the reason and the higher aim is similar in the *Sutras*.

The text *Chos kyi me long*¹⁰, *The Mirror of the Dharma*, states:

"Listening or studying should not be understood to mean an ocean of words; the supreme study or listening is that which permits one to understand on the basis of one single word".

(It is not a matter of just studying a lot of words or a large number of texts; to really understand the meaning, one single word would be enough).

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The *Lang kar gshes pa Sutra* ¹¹ states:

"*Mang du thos pa* (one who has listened or studied a lot) is one who understands the meaning, not an expert in words".

To follow a Teaching or to practise it is therefore necessary to begin to study or to listen in order to dispel the darkness of the mind which makes one ignorant of the real meaning. Thereafter one tries to liberate oneself from one's eventual doubts, dispelling them through reasoning. These preliminary trainings are indispensable on the Path, and are even more essential to apply if one enters into the Supreme Path, which is that of the *rDzogs chen* teaching. Everything that has been said thus far serves to prepare a precise basis for causing the knowledge, the sense and the meaning of the true supreme Teaching to arise. This is extremely important.

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(What follows refers to the second of the six principle points of Klong chen pa, that is to say)

Calming the three gates and re-educating oneself: the seven mind training

The Masters usually say that the "sign of study in one who has listened to many teachings is the showing of a humble and calm character, while the sign of the application of the practice of meditation is that one is not conditioned by passions and emotions". Through (observing a practitioner's) behaviour at level of the body, (which should be) an aware and attentive way of behaving that avoids and does not create problems, one can understand whether the condition of the mind of a practitioner is integrated with the Teaching or not. One can furthermore understand if the practice has entered into the dimension of a practitioner or not, both through his or her voice, because that person will communicate in a pleasant way with others, as well as through his or her mind which will be humble, calm and relaxed. All these manifestations arise automatically, in the same way that smoke arises when there is a fire. If they are not present, it means that the individual has not entered with his or her existence into the principle of the Teachings and has not integrated it.

For a true practitioner the knowledge of the Teaching should not remain at an intellectual level; through self-examination and training himself he should find this integration; in this way the Teaching can arise in his dimension and his dimension will be integrated with the knowledge of the Teaching.

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A practitioner can integrate his or her own condition into the *Dharma* in a precise way only if he or she trains in a precise way with the preliminary practices.

Just as, for example, one needs to listen to the rhythm of a piece of music before beginning to dance to it so that one's dancing can follow the rhythm, in the same way, before entering into the practice, one needs to train the mind in a precise way.

The first thing one needs to do is to meditate on the following four topics:

1) understanding that the human condition is not easy to obtain, one takes note of the fact that having obtained such a condition is a very meaningful opportunity.

('very meaningful' means that a person can either realize themselves in their lifetime or can continue to create great problems and go on living in Samsara for an infinite length of time).

2) Even if one now has this opportunity, one must try keep one's mind continually present on the fact that the nature (of this life) is impermanent, since one is born and dies.

3) But remembering only that the nature of this life is impermanent is not enough. There is also the fact of *Karma*, the consequences of our positive and negative actions, and one is obliged to follow these karmic consequences automatically, even if one does not wish to.

4) Through the power of *karma* one can transmigrate infinitely in Samsara and in suffering.

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Meditating on and understanding these topics, one thus realizes the illusory nature of Samsara and distances one's own mind from this illusion, turning it towards the Teaching. Not only does one turn one's mind towards the Teaching, but with the presence of the Teaching this understanding becomes concrete and is integrated into one's own condition. One therefore needs to train oneself in this way.

This training of the mind, as the foundation of the Path of the *rDzogs chen* teaching, the primordial state, is explained in particular in the *sNying thig* Teaching which is the ultimate essence of the Teaching, the state, the knowledge of the Great Perfection.

There are seven principle mind trainings which ones should try to practise.

These trainings are easy to apply for whoever follows the Teaching; they lead one to the integration of the Teaching into one's existence and into the state of knowledge of the individual.

The Method for training the mind in the thought of the impermanence of all compounded phenomena (or aggregates).

In the Instruction on the seven mind trainings known as the *Thar pa't them skas*, (The Stairway to Liberation, written by the Master Jigmed gling pa) one reads:

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"Through a supreme accumulation of good actions in past lives we have received this precious human body which has all the (required) qualifications; it is something that is difficult to obtain as regards the example, the quantity and the conditions.

This is a good opportunity. Thinking that we have this good opportunity, if we fall victim to a provisional cause such as an accident - and many such causes exist - if we should have to die tonight, tomorrow morning we would be a corpse on the bed. What can we do at this point? Many people ignore the real condition of things and do not think that death will really ever arrive for them; in this way, following only that which they find in front of themselves, their own karmic vision, they die.

Some people recognize in a minimal way that death could come for them; but they believe they have a lot of time before they become old: through rituals, practices, methods and cures they hope to live longer, and this preparation for continuing to live is their only hope and preoccupation. Immersed in these actions they go ahead considering only the things of the present life.

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Now we live in a degenerate era, we have arrived at the most impure condition. And even if we should live long enough, with 21,000 breaths, life is already shorter than a day; consuming the breaths for 30 days, a month, twelve months, a year, it is not so difficult that life should come to an end.

The *rGya cher Rolpa Sutra*¹² affirms:

'The three worlds are impermanent like the clouds that gather in the autumn sky; the birth and death of beings appear as if (one was oneself looking at) a representation (or display). The life of sentient beings passes like a lightning

bolt in the sky; and like water falling from a steep mountain, they quickly pass away.

They don't remain even for an instant, time always passes. Thinking of this condition, one needs to produce the essence, and to develop diligence like someone whose head has caught fire (that is to say, if someone's head has caught on fire they can't wait a long time to put out the fire, they must do so immediately)".

The method for training the mind thinking that all our actions create causes of suffering.

In the text *The Statrway to Liberation* one reads:

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"Our happiness and suffering, good and bad, follow each other according to the karmic potentialities that we have produced. In any event, if we observe well, in all that we do in life such as conquering enemies or helping friends and relations, earning, becoming important or producing a harvest, in desire or in attachment, in hatred, in anger, in sympathy towards others and in giving advice, in becoming famous or important, there is nothing in which one can have faith or which is stable.

For example, even if we try to accumulate riches and objects in every way, thieves and enemies take them away; it seems almost as if we are doing them a favour. Even if a certain food or drink might seem very good and tasty while we are enjoying them, they can become the cause for the arising of an illness, and sometimes they can become the cause of our death. Even if we may hope that friends and relatives will remain closely linked to us through the type of relationship we have with them, sometimes they can become our sworn enemies. Sometimes it may seem that we are doing no harm to others in direct way; but nevertheless, with distraction, we speak badly and without meaning, we fool someone or accuse someone unjustly, or show that we don't value something and in some way we make the mind of that person 'burn' (that is to say we insult or displease someone, making them unhappy).

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All these things are in reality part of the nature of suffering, and are the cause of suffering. So if up until now we have not understood this and have behaved in a distracted way, this is a defect. The truth is that all the actions which we have carried out right up until yesterday are now nothing more than memories, and they have no concrete reality that one can follow (with one's mind).

Like last night's dream, so too today's vision will become like tonight's dream; and all the actions we will carry out tomorrow will also become like tomorrow's dream; there is nothing in them which is stable.

Notwithstanding this fact, even though there is nothing in all this, we feel a meaningless attachment. Through this attachment we struggle, accepting with attachment and rejecting with aversion. We speak of things that either please or don't please (us), and we accumulate objects and riches. We pass the time between considerations of happiness and suffering, and all these preconceptions affect our behaviour.

In this manner we are like an accumulation of all the defects, all the worldly visions which fool us like an illusion. The nature of the illusion is neither concrete nor stable. When we (come to) understand (this), we are sorry for having this mistaken way of seeing.

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From now on, without thinking of what will happen or of what we will do (in the future), recognizing that this concept of ours of an ego (and our) attachment is a big error, we enter into the application of the practice, profoundly, with our hearts. We train in this thought".

The method for training the mind developing virtuous actions and compassion towards all sentient beings.

In the text *The Staircase of Liberation* one reads:

"Even if we know we are impermanent and we recognize the nature of all our actions to be suffering, if we do not understand the way in which one applies the practice, the *dharmā* which is called the cause or condition necessary for the practice of the *dharmā*, that is to say food, clothing, well-being or all that which one can enjoy, never satisfies us and we always want more.

That which we have is not enough, we want to better (it), we always want to have something more in relation to others; the mind is used to thinking in this way, and is always directed towards the possession of new objects. In this way, dedicating ourselves to the eight worldly occupations, we use up our lives. Many people act in this way; for this reason one should think deeply of the suffering of Samsara and one should develop compassion for all the beings of the six *Lokas*".

In this regard the *Dran pa nyer bzhag Sutra*¹³ states:

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"The condition of Samsara is like the point of a needle, there is not one single moment of peace or of happiness in it."

Thus Samsara is only suffering, and brings no happiness at all. One might think that if the suffering of the three lower realms and of the six *Lokas* is alleviated by the Buddhas perhaps the problem is not so great, but in reality it is not like that.

In the *Vinaya* one can read:

"I offer you the Path to liberation, but liberation depends on you; so follow the path diligently".

We don't know how to carry out positive actions and give up negative actions. The Enlightened (*Tathagata*) Buddha has shown the Path of liberation in various ways and with different systems, but the liberation from Samsara and from the lower states depends only on ourselves and on our diligence.

For example, when someone is asleep no one else can cancel or block the dream of that sleeping person.

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If it was not like that, since the Buddha has infinite compassion, the light of wisdom and compassion of a single Buddha would certainly have liberated all sentient beings from Samsara many *kalpas* ago.

We have fallen into Samsara as if into an abyss; not only that, but we are also bound to our dualistic concepts of subject and object. Thus we are tortured by the weapons of the passions and the emotions that we are continually creating, or we enjoy that which in fact is present suffering, thus inviting the suffering which will come in the future; there is no other choice. Thinking in this way, an infinite compassion for all the sentient beings of the six realms will arise.

To carry all sentient beings onto the Path of liberation, honouring in every way from today onwards the Three Jewels, which are the source of all (good) qualities, we confess all the negative thoughts which arise, purifying with this strong antidote even those negative thoughts which arise only for an instant.

The *Vinaya*¹⁴ states:

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"One should not think that small hindrances or a small negative actions, in that they are little, do not count; even a small spark can burn a heap of grass as big

as a mountain. In the same way, too, merit and good intentions, no matter how small, must be accumulated, trying always to develop a virtuous attitude".

The method for training the mind through the advice and the Teaching of the Master.

The Stairway to Liberation states:

"It is not enough to understand that in the dimension of the six *Lokas*, the dimension of transmigration, there is no happiness, not even as small as the point of a needle, beyond suffering, and to feel sad. One does not liberate oneself from suffering in this way; to have a concrete benefit one must apply the method".

What is the benefit of this? In the *Sutra* called *The Advice to King gSal*¹⁵ (*gSal* was a famous king who was a disciple of the Buddha) one reads:

"Great King, in that period and in that circumstance

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there is nothing that can save us other than the holy *Dharma*.

The holy *Dharma* in that period, in that moment is salvation, is the protector, is the support, is the place of salvation, is that which helps."

Thus it is said.

This does not mean that one only needs to know how to read a book. Just as butter is produced from milk, and fire produces smoke, so too, to find the essence one must entrust oneself to and follow the Master. In this regard the *sDud pa*¹⁶ (a type of essential *Sutra*) states:

'One should always follow the wise masters since in this way all the qualities can arise. Just as sick people follow the advice of a doctor to cure their illnesses, in the same way one should follow a virtuous Master'".

"Analyzing (this) in greater detail, the *Anuyoga Tantra*

*dGongs pa 'dus pa*¹⁷ affirms in this regard:

'Externally the Master is expert and capable of dispelling every doubt concerning study and about the Teaching; internally the Master with great kindness shows the methods of *Tantra*.

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Secretly the root Master is he who shows the nature of the innate mind. The Master of the Base of one's own nature, the Master of one's own pure mind, the Master (who is) the symbol of vision, the Master of the lineage of the human transmission: these are the Masters'".

In the system of the common Vehicle (the *Sutras*) the Master is defined as a virtuous Master, he who helps. In the Secret Vehicle of the Essence of the *Vajra* (the *Vajrayana*) it is explained that there are different types of Masters; on the basis of (the explanation of) these differences one can first of all examine the Master, then one can understand how to follow him, and lastly, one can understand what he communicates; one should train in this manner.

The method for examining the Master.

There are two topics on this subject, concerning the (type of) Master one should follow, and the (type of) Master one should not follow. In *The Clear Light of the Path of Liberation* (this too is a text of instructions on the introduction to the *rDzogs chen* teaching, written by A 'dzom 'Brup pa Rinpoche) one reads:

"The character of individuals generally changes and is easily conditioned by secondary or provisional causes. For this reason it is always

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necessary to follow a virtuous Master and virtuous companions; one should learn from the Masters of the past; one needs to develop oneself diligently; even if this is the only good quality one possesses, one should try not to lose it but to increase it.

We are now in the *Kaliyuga*; and for this reason we are notably conditioned by the passions and the emotions and our way of seeing is greatly mistaken; we see things in a contrary way (*log lta*) instead of understanding their real meaning.

People who do not have many past causes of purification, and who in the past have not dedicated merits or made invocations, at the same time meet other people of the same type as themselves, or else they are afflicted by demonic hindrances and by the various obstacles that manifest. In this way they find themselves following a mistaken path. For this reason the precious teachings of *Tantra* say that it is very difficult to find a virtuous and perfect Master, with all the favourable conditions.

When one follows a Master, he must necessarily have the following qualifications:

- externally to be able to understand and integrate the meaning of the rules of the *Vinaya*;

- internally know how to integrate the meaning of the Path of the *Bodhisattva*;

- secretly to possess the *samaya* of the *Tantra*;

These three qualities are called the three *sDom pa* or vows (this does not mean to say that the Master must externally be a monk, as in the *Sutra*, but that he must know these principles: the principle of the vow of the *Sutras* is to give up disturbing others, that of the *Bodhisattvas* is to put oneself at the disposition of all beings for the purpose of benefiting them. These are just examples, while what is really important is the essence of these qualities, which must not be lacking).

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- His condition must be pure, just as his intention is pure.

- he must know the principles of *Sutra* and *Tantra* well (but if, in relation to *rDzogs chen*, he thinks he finds a contradiction between it and the *Sutra* (teachings), and he does not understand that the principle is the same, this means that he lacks this quality)

- he must have a great knowledge of all the fields and feel infinite compassion for all beings

- he must externally understand the *Triptaka*¹⁸,

- internally (he must understand) the Teaching of the four series of *Tantra*¹⁹, and be expert in all the rituals of *Tantrism*.

Applying the meaning of all this through practice, in his state there really arise the qualities of knowledge.

Thus he also knows how to care for his disciples through the four essential aspects of collaboration, (*bsDu ba't dngos po bzhi*) (which are: generosity; speaking in a pleasing way; applying the methods as necessary; and entering into the dimension of a person, into his desires and into his condition).

One needs to have such a Master.

Specifically in the case of Master who teaches the *Vajrayana*, he must first of all have matured his own condition through the four initiations, there must be no interruption in the lineage and there must not be anything lacking in what was promised during the initiation; he must not (behave in way that) contradicts any *samaya* or vow,

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and he must live in the the principle of it; he must not be conditioned by the passions and the emotions, not be disturbed by thoughts and must find

himself in the nature of peace; he must be humble and understand well the real meaning of the *Tantra* (of the *Vajrayana*) both from the point of view of the Path and the Fruit; he must have obtained the signs of the practice of *mantra*, and the vision of the manifestation of transformation; he must hold the real knowledge of the primordial condition and with it be free in his own state; full of compassion, he must dedicate himself only to the benefit of others. He should have no worldly attachment for this life and should not dedicate himself to worldly activities, committing himself principally for the future life. He should think (of) and apply the *Dharma* profoundly, understanding that Samsara is suffering. In his mind he should always feel this sentiment, and transmit this knowledge also to others, directing them towards this level. He must guide and follow his disciples as necessary and have the wisdom of clarity of the methods, following the order or the advice of his (own) Master, he

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must hold the empowerment of the lineage of the Masters.
One should follow a Master such as this.

The specific qualities requires in a Master who teaches the secret methods

In particular, with regard to a Master who transmits the *Upadesa* Teaching (that is to say, one who does not only impart *tantric* initiations, but who introduces the state of knowledge, such as a Master of *rDzogs chen*), the *Tantra* states:

'An expert individual who does not carry out many worldly actions, who dwells in the state of the *Dharmata* and who is mature in this knowledge, who is not ignorant of desires or enjoyments for the purpose of obtainment (that is to say, he is not conditioned, does not feel the need to renounce them but knows how to integrate them) has the qualities of the Master of *Tantra*'.

A Master whose character is trained in the *Bodhicitta*, who has real knowledge of his own condition of the state, and who can be defined as wise, learned, and expert, is the supreme Master, and (such a Master) is not internally conditioned by any worldly action²⁰. He, both through teachings such as *Lung* and *Tantra*, and through explanation combined with his own experience is capable of communicating according to the capacity and condition of the disciple because he knows how to enter into the condition of the disciple himself.

When one meets such a Master, with whom there is a link from a previous life, one can understand both directly and indirectly that this is a Master very different from the others; thus devotion arises and respect develops.

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Whatever teaching is imparted by the Master becomes something very useful and beneficial, and specifically it becomes an antidote to all the emotions and passions linked to the condition of the individual. If one meets a Master of this kind, whatever signs there may be and no matter what way he presents himself, one should absolutely follow him.

A Master who holds the empowerment (literally: potentiality) of the lineage is capable of communicating through direct experience the way of seeing, of practising (applying) and of behaving (attitude) (*Ita ba*, *sGom pa*, *sPyod pa*). It is necessary to follow a Master such as this.

The qualities of a Master who is not worthy of being followed

One should not, on the other hand, follow a master who does not have the qualities of study, of reasoning and of practice, nor a master who even though he does not possess these required qualities enjoys a rank or an important

position of which he is proud. Furthermore, even if an individual possesses the right qualifications to a minimal degree but has not been assigned the task of teaching by his Master (and does so) without permission (in order) to enjoy the eight worldly *dharmas*, thus imparting teachings, initiations and instructions without (following the correct) criteria²¹, accepting disciples in a hypocritical way, the explanation of the View (or Way of Seeing) that comes out of his mouth (remains nothing more than) dry and lifeless words which he uses to show and to transmit the profound meaning of the Teaching in an incorrect way.

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Even though he has no qualities whatsoever, he feels important when he receives honours and offerings and believes that lay people - both men and women - have faith in him; but the truth is that he does not feel compassion, and does not apply *Bodhicitta* towards others.

These types of master are to be abandoned and avoided.

In the *Lung*²² (original text of the *rDzogs chen Sems sde*) one reads:

'A Master is not perfect when he is like a monkey (a monkey does everything any way it comes, (always) acting in its own interests).

These types of master even in the case of the *Upadesa* are following a mistaken path with their teaching'.

The Master Padmasambhava says:

To follow a master without examining him is like drinking poison. To communicate something important to a disciple without having first having examined him is like throwing oneself off a rock'.

It is necessary to understand that the Master who has all the right qualifications is the image of the empowerment of the Buddhas of all the directions manifesting in human form for the benefit of all beings.

The compassion and the potentiality of this type of Master are equal to the to those of the Buddha: if one has a good relationship with them, this can lead to realization in (this very) life, and even if one has a negative relationship, this can be the cause of the (eventual) ending of Samsara.

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When it is said that one should first of all examine the Master, one should do so before receiving Teaching (from him), and one should follow him only if he has the right qualifications. If he does not have them, it is much better not to follow him.

One does not examine a Master after having received Teachings (from him), because at this point one has already created a spiritual relationship; in this case it much better to think that all that the Master manifests is something good, a pure vision; instead of considering (any) defects to be such, one should interpret them as (good) qualities and (thus) one should train in devotion and in the intention of pure vision.

If, on the other hand one thinks of the defect as being a defect, this can create many obstacles.

'Examining the Master' really means that he must have the qualities defined in the *Sutras* and the *Tantras*; however, even if that is not the way things are, the Master must have real compassion. In conclusion, the way of examining the Master consists in observing

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whether the Master has or does not have *Bodhicitta*, great compassion.

If he has great compassion it brings benefit to the disciples both in this life and in the next life, and therefore there is nothing wrong. His teaching is

linked to the path of the *Mahayana* (compassion is the basis of the *Mahayana* Teaching) and this must become a pure path. But if he does not have compassion it means that he feels a personal interest, and therefore cannot bring benefit to the state of the disciples. The Teaching (he gives) may even seem very profound and marvelous, but the aim is still to acquire the worldly attainments of this life. Therefore the real test of a Master can also be simply whether he shows himself to have compassion or not. If he really does have it, whatever his way of being or whatever type of clothing he might wear, he is a Master one should follow.

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It is better not to follow those individuals who do not possess compassion but who provisionally seem to manifest kindness or to feel sadness for the condition of Samsara, even if their way of practising and their attitude seem very wonderful.

The true condition of many wise Masters always remains hidden and is not easy for ordinary people to discover; it is also difficult to understand and examine their qualities in a normal manner. Furthermore there are many people who pretend to be very wise and to be great realized practitioners, but who in reality are only expert in fooling others, manifesting an apparent holiness. In truth, the Master to whom one is linked from one's last life is the most important.

If, on meeting a Master, listening to him, or even simply just hearing his name, one feels devotion or a sensation of joy, and this seems to lead to an evolution, a change in our vision, it means that in one's past life one has had a relationship with that Master.

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In such a case, if one meets such a Master, it is not so much necessary to examine him as to decide to follow him.

In general, meeting a Master depends on our pure and impure karmic vision. If one meets a Master who with kindness imparts teachings that are very useful, however such a Master might manifest, one should behave (in relation to him) as if one was in the presence of the actual Buddha. Understanding this one will behave accordingly.

If one does not have a positive karmic cause it is not easy to meet a good Master. If one does not have pure vision, even if one met the Buddha himself, it would be very difficult to recognize his numerous qualities. Therefore, meeting a Master who communicates the Teaching depends on one's own previous karma; this is an important thing to recognize and to appreciate.

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How to follow a Master.

In the *Kun bZang Bla ma'i Zhal Lung* (*The Voice of the Master who is Samantabhadra*, a text written by dPal sprul Rinpoche containing an explanation of the *sNon 'gro*) one reads:

"With regard to how one should follow a Master, the *sDong po bKod pa Sutra*²³ affirms:

'Noble son, consider yourself to be like a sick person'...and so on, setting out the meaning, the examples and all the explanations: if one suffers from an illness it is necessary to follow an expert doctor; if one is going along a dangerous path, one follows a guide; when, while on the road there is danger of bandits, enemies and animals, one seeks protection for the journey.

If one is going by sea, as merchants do when travelling to reach islands, everyone entrusts themselves to the captain of the ship.

To cross a river, those who have climbed aboard a boat must follow (the instructions of) the ferryman.

In the same way one should always follow a virtuous Master, who can save us from birth and death, passions and emotions, and from their effect which is fear'.

'If, even when one is threatened by a danger to one's life, one does not act in a manner contrary to the state of the virtuous Master, such courage is like putting on armour.

If one's own mind is stable and does not change with temporary secondary causes or because of whatever arises or because of whatever one sees, and if one renders service to the Master without thinking of one's own interest, sacrificing even one's body and life if necessary; if one does not always protect only oneself but carries out all that the Master says; if a person follows the Master in this way, with devotion, (such a person) can be liberated through this very devotion'.

'To have great devotion and to consider the Master as a truly enlightened being,

recognizing that he acts always with intelligence for the benefit of others; to dedicate oneself to study and to possess the capacity of intelligence to be able to maintain all that the Master has communicated and taught; to have great compassion towards all beings who have no salvation and who suffer; to follow with great respect all the promises (*samaya*) made to the Master; to be humble in character and peaceful in body, voice and mind; to leave space (for others) to participate in the activities of the Master and also in those of the brothers and sisters of the *Vajra*; to have the courage to spend for or donate to the Master anything whatever; to have a pure vision and not to harbour many impure thoughts and visions; to be aware and hold to the view that it would be wrong to carry out bad and non-virtuous actions in front of the state of the Master who is the holder of wisdom: this is the way in which one should follow the Master'.

In every moment, all that one does should be in accordance with the opinion and the method of the Master, and one should try to always be present and not to create contradictions and conflicts with him.

Even if the Master should insult one fiercely, one should not become angry or hold on to this with one's mind: one should be like a good horse; if the Master asks one to do something or sends one to some place to do something, one should not feel sad or tired: one should be like a boat; if the Master asks one to carry out any action whatsoever - good or bad - one should bear it, like a bridge; one should bear everything, difficulties, the heat, cold, all that one encounters on the path, like a heated piece of iron being beaten out by the blacksmith; all that is requested by the Master must be carried out, just as a servant would carry it out.

To eliminate pride and assume a humble position like the street sweeper who cleans the street; to renounce pride, and to respect everyone like a yak whose horns have been cut (an animal with horns feels powerful, but if he doesn't have them anymore he feels modest), this is the way in which one should follow the Master'.

All these examples and explanations are taken from the *sDong po bKod pa*.

'There way of honouring the Master has three subdivisions:

- the superior way is by the offering of practice, by applying all that the Master has taught;
- the medium way involves serving the Master with body, voice and mind, putting one's own three existences at his disposition, like a servant;

- the lower way is by generously offering every material thing, such a food and the objects of enjoyment'.

'Even if the Master manifests his way and his actions in different manners, reflecting and understanding that these are manifestations of intelligence carried out in order to benefit others, one trains as much as possible in pure vision'.

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'The *Mahasiddha* Saraha manifested as an archer, the *Mahasiddha* Shabirapa as a hunter; in India the great *Mahasiddhas* manifested as fishermen or butchers and in various other ways. One should not develop a contrary or opposed way of seeing: no matter what way the Master may manifest, one should train as much as possible in pure vision'.

'If one does not behave in this way, and one thinks that there is a contradiction or something mistaken (in the Master's behaviour), or one tries to find and examine the defects of the Master, (this means that) even if one were to be close to the Buddha for a long time one would (also) find defects in him'.

'Therefore if the ways of the Master should appear to have some defect, one should address oneself saying:

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"It's not that there is a defect in the actions of the Master, rather that I am full of impure vision".

Thinking in this way, one carries out a kind of re-education of oneself and tries to develop devotion and pure vision'.

"Sometimes it may seem that the sacred Master wants to annoy us and that he feels dislike for us: even if it should seem to be that way, one should not become angry, but one should think that having discovered a defect or hindrance in us, he is making us overcome it through his insult or rebuke. When the Master is in a calm state, one should go to him, follow him and practise purification confessing all one's errors'.

'The necessary training in respect for the Master furthermore involves (adopting) the following peaceful attitudes:

when the Master gets up, one does not remain seated oneself; when the Master sits down

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one should ask him about the state of his health and offer him all that is necessary; when the Master walks and one accompanies him, one should serve him, and one should never walk in front of him or on his right side.

If one gives no consideration to the seat on which the Master sits, the horse on which he rides, and so on, this can diminish one's merit.

When one goes to where the Master is, one should not slam the door, one should not behave in a funny manner, one should not appear with an angry face, one should not lie, one should not spread gossip, one should not laugh stupidly without respect and one should not speak of things without any meaning; all these things must be abandoned; on the contrary, one should try to maintain a calm state of body, voice and mind. Thus it is said. (That is to say, it is explained in this manner in the *Sutra* or in the *Tantra*).

If someone speaks ill of the Master or hates him, one should not make friends with that person. If one has the capacity to cause such people to experience devotion towards the Master or if one has the possibility to change the attitude of the people who speak ill of the Master, one should enter into action; if on the other hand one is not capable of doing this, one should not speak much with such persons without a specific reason'.

'The same should happen in relation to those who take care of the Master and of the brothers and sisters of the *Vajra*; for all the time that one is with them, neither tiredness nor sadness should arise,

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one should not become tired (of being with them) but on the contrary it should be easy to be with them and to stay together with them; one should be like a belt: whatever action one carries out, one should not assume a position of greater importance than the others, but one should integrate oneself very simply, just like salt; if the others say bad things or argue and ask one to carry out intolerable actions, if one has the capacity, one should put up with this patiently, like the pillar of a house. Harmonizing oneself in this way with the *Vajra* brothers and sisters, one follows the Master'.

'If following the Master one should encounter obstacles - such as cold, hunger, thirst, and such things, one should try to bear them all and to overcome them; one follows all that the Master says, and with great devotion and respect one asks him for the Teaching.

One can also provisionally ask the Master for advice on one's own affairs and on one's own behaviour, and applying the advice of the Master, one should follow him with total devotion."

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The method for trying to understand the meaning of the communication of the Master and the Way of Behaving.

'When one follows the Master, one should try to understand how to follow him in all circumstances, just as ducks that swim play calmly in a lake without dirtying its water; or just as a bee which flies in a garden, tasting the essence of the flowers does not destroy their fragrance or their colour; at the same time, without becoming discouraged or tired, one should try to do everything that the Master says. One should maintain the state of mind of the Master (in oneself) with great devotion and courage, and one should receive, follow, and learn all that is contained in his mind, and all his qualities through study, reasoning and practice,

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like a vase into which the contents of another vase are emptied.'

'When the Master carries out *Bodhisattva* activity for the benefit of others and for the great accumulation of merit and wisdom, if we make a material contribution or contribute in whatever other way we can, even minimally, making sacrifices with our body, voice, and mind, we will at the end feel satisfaction for what we have done. If we then also offer this satisfaction too as a contribution in accordance with the Master's actions, through the power and the supreme sacred intention of the Master we will obtain the fruit of his good and virtuous actions just as he does".

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'Specifically, to accept whatever the Master asks us to do (even if this should be the cleaning of his house) is the path to the true accumulation which one should try to apply as much as possible'.

'The principle and supreme field of Refuge and of the accumulation of merits is the Master; there is nothing that is better than him. In the precise circumstances in which the Master confers initiations or imparts teachings, he represents the union of all Enlightened beings of the three times and all the directions. Their empowerment (lit: potentiality) and their compassion are unified in the state of the Master, which is inseparable from the state of all Enlightened beings; for this reason one usually makes offerings to the Master thousands and thousands of times; and in the specific circumstance of the

Teaching, if one offers only a mouthful of food, the merit of this offering is truly very powerful.

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The practice of *Tantra* has two levels, the Development stage (*bsKyed rim*) and the Completion stage (*rDzogs rim*).

In the transformation and visualization of the Development stage (*bsKyed rim*), form manifests as the divinity, but the essence (of the divinity) is one's own root Master, there is none other. Understanding the meaning of visualization in this way one rapidly obtains and receives the empowerment.

In the same way, when one visualizes at the level of the Completion stage (*rDzogs rim*) too, the arising of wisdom in the practitioner's own state depends solely on the empowerment received through the effect of the profound devotion to the Master. Through this devotion, the state of the Master - the knowledge which is wisdom - arises in one's own state. Therefore, the true essence of the practice carried out according to the method of *bsKyed-rDzogs* and of whatever other practice is the always the state of the Master, in which everything is unified. Both the *Sutras* and the *Tantras* confirm that the Master is a truly Enlightened being'.

'The state of the sacred Master is inseparable from the state of all Enlightened beings. Yet in order to save beings who have an impure karmic vision the Master

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manifests himself in human form as a physical person. For this reason those who have a human physical body, should make an effort to follow whatever the Master requests through the three devotions and the three ways of serving a master, trying to find themselves in the condition of the unification of their own mind with the state of the Master. If, contrary to what has been said above, one does not serve the Master, does not respect him, and does not follow what he says while he is alive, but when he is no longer around perhaps paints his image as in a *thangka* pretending and proclaiming that they are meditating on him and the real condition as if seeking it somewhere else, without invoking him with devotion and respect to receive the state of knowledge, the qualification of one's own knowledge of the state, and all the qualifications, all this is the equivalent of a contradiction between the one who is practising and the practice itself.

It is furthermore said that in the state of the *bardo* it is possible to meet or have a vision of the Master, and that the Master can bring salvation in this way.

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But this, too, depends principally on devotion, that is to say on whether one truly has or has not an infinite devotion. If the devotion of the individual and the compassionate potentiality of the Master meet, it is possible to have this type of vision, which does not, however, mean that the Master enters into the state of the *bardo* to save an individual. So even if we have met a noteworthy Master during our lifetime, without our devotion, the Master will not be able to save us in the moment of the *bardo*'.

Lastly, what is called the 'training in meditation and attitude' means conscientiously observing the behaviour and the way the Master acts, and trying to put it into practice (ourselves), emulating him completely. It is said that everything goes together in twos (couples), one imitating the other, one after the other, and that which imitates depends on the larger capacity to imitate of either the one or the other.

In general, in applying the *Dharma* too, it is necessary to emulate the Enlightened beings, Buddhas, and *Bodhisattvas* of the past. Thus a disciple must try to learn the behaviour of his own Master, and try to transfer this behaviour just as it is into his or her own state.

A disciple who follows a Master must be like a *tsba tsba* stamped from the mould that produces it: precisely identical; he must try to obtain in a minimal, partial or total way all the qualities of the state of mind of the Master. In conclusion, in the beginning one must be expert in examining the Master, in the middle one must know how to follow the Master, and at the end one should try to train oneself to apply within oneself the state of the Master and his behaviour. Whoever is expert in these three aspects is surely following a pure and correct path'.

These explanations thus clarify how one should follow a Master and how one should try to understand his state and behaviour.

The way of training the mind practising the advice of the Master.

The Stairway to Liberation states:

Following the virtuous Master and appreciating him as one appreciates one's own eyes one receives profound and vast teachings. But just receiving or listening or just intention alone, do not permit (one) to touch the meaning of one's own primordial state: it is necessary to apply oneself and meditate focusing on this knowledge without letting oneself be dragged along by distraction.

The *Phal po che Sutra*²⁴ states:

'Whoever does not meditate and does not apply the *Dharma* is like a very expert ferryman who transports many people across a river, but who nevertheless drowns there himself in the water'.
(This is the condition of whoever, although they have received many teachings and have a certain knowledge, does not apply it).

The Master 'Phags pa Lha (in Sanskrit Aryadeva) said:
'Even if a learned person has studied for hundreds and thousands of *kalpas* and has arrived at knowledge beyond study, a learned person cannot understand the state of their own empowerment'.
(In studying one is always focused on analysis, on external factors, and does not turn one's attention within, to one's own state. Therefore, if one does not turn one's attention within, one cannot understand this state even if one has arrived at a supreme level of study).

This is what happened to whoever who followed Buddha Shakyamuni only like a student. Ananda followed the Buddha for many years and completed many studies until he had a knowledge as vast as the ocean; but when for the first time he collected together the teachings of the Buddha, he could not succeed in realizing the level of *Arhat*, and remained at the lower level of *rGyun zhugs* (stream enterer).

In reality, as is stated in the *Tantra* of Vajrapani *The Real (or Royal) Initiation of Vajrapani*, the Master Ananda is considered to be an emanation of Vajradhara.

We ordinary individuals, who do not meditate, thinking that we can become realized without meditating and only because we desire it, are living in ignorance. To awaken the profound wisdom that is present in our condition from the very beginning, after the perfect Master has introduced us to the state and imparted instructions through the real meaning, through symbol, and through experiences, we must learn and follow without letting even an instant pass in laziness or distraction, and without delaying because of

sentimental attachments (of an romantic nature)²⁵ or because of circumstances linked to our daily life such as food or activities,

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without letting ourselves be overwhelmed by indifference, worry or hope. Training oneself in this way, one should control oneself like a mother who has lost her only son and thinks only of finding him again, staying present and not letting even an instant go by in interests related only to worldly things. If laziness arises, one overcomes it. If the idea delaying occurs one eliminates it as if swallowing food without chewing it. If indifference arises, one dominates it with presence, like a wounded animal or like a unicorn that always seeks an isolated place.

(A wounded animal seeks out an isolated place because, in his condition, he fears being further harmed; the unicorn, because he is sought by everyone for his precious horn, keeps his distance (from others) because he is afraid of being killed). Directing all one's intentions in this way, one applies the Teachings received from the Master. One should train the mind in this intention (that is to say, having received the Teaching, one dedicates one's time to realization of it without remaining indifferent)".

In general, governed by the continuation of the presence of awareness, one tries to always integrate all that the Master has communicated into ones own condition.

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The Method for training the mind in understanding that happiness in this present life is suffering.

The Stairway to Liberation states:

We are ignorant of what we should apply and what we should avoid; we are interested in and desire happiness, but we do nothing but apply the cause of suffering, like moths that hurl themselves towards a lamp and die burned alive because of their attachment to the light; like a bee, which out of attachment to the essence of flowers, dies sucking a flower which closes around him; like those animals which, because of their attachment to sound, are killed by hunters while listening to the sound of a flute; like fish, which, because of their attachment to taste, die on the hot sand, caught by the fishermen who throw food onto the water; like an elephant, who, desiring contact with something cool, enters into a muddy lake and cannot succeed in getting out of it again. (These are examples of how attachment to our senses - sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch - creates problems).

In the *Doba mdzod*²⁶, the *Songs of the Mahastiddhas*, one reads: 'One should observe and understand that which the fish, the moth, the elephant, the bee, and the wild animals do'.

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These examples explain therefore how one gets the result of suffering which one does not want through attachment to (what is in fact nothing other than) an illusory vision.

Understanding the condition (of things) one should train the mind in this knowledge.

The training of the Mind through the experience of *Samadhi* (contemplation, meditation).

The Stairway to Liberation affirms:

One trains the mind towards a condition not disturbed by thoughts: this is the supreme door for entering into the state of contemplation.

In the text *Grol ba'i thigle*²⁷, *The Thigle of Liberation*, one reads:

'With the breathing from above (*steng lung*) one controls all visions; with the breathing from below (*'og lung*) arises the state of knowledge of Emptiness; with the middle breathing (*bar lung*) holding and rotating it, one realizes the unification. The vision of all beings is like something external; the state of *rig pa* is like something internal; between these two there is the karmic breathing which is like the steed on which the mind is riding; in this way one falls into the dimension of subject and object and transmigrates infinitely.

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Through the profound and rapid vehicle of the *Vajrayana*, those who have fallen into illusion, controlling the entry and exit of the karmic *prana*, do not need to follow or practise the path of reasoning for a long time as is done in the lesser vehicles, since primordial natural wisdom is directly understood in an instant'.

The method of the *Tantras* has three principal aspects.
The first is:

The training of the mind in the state not disturbed by thoughts (*Mi rtog pa*) of bliss and voidness (*bDe stong*).

The *Stairway to Liberation* states:

'One sits in the position of the seven conditions of *Samadhi* or of Vairocana; our body is internally empty like a ball; in its centre one visualizes the central channel, straight and thin as the stem of a lotus flower, blue as a sky without clouds and clear as a lamp that burns sesame seed oil. Keeping these four qualifications present, one concentrates on a white letter HAM in the upper part of the central channel, in the head, and

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at the end of the central channel, below the navel, on a red letter A; one establishes the visualization with the four applications²⁸ (that is to say, one inhales, holds, and so on). The upper breathing is pushed downwards, while the lower is pulled up. Pulling the red letter A upwards, one lights a fire which gradually develops and which, through its heat dissolves the letter HAM; from this letter nectar comes down which fills the four *chakras*²⁹ and all the secondary channels. Thus there develops the sensation of bliss and emptiness and wisdom arises. Visualizing that at the centre of our body a white A appears, one fixes on this letter without other thoughts, and one remains in this presence. Through this method of sensation one generates, and there arises the wisdom, *Prajña*. One trains like this many times, but for short periods of time, until these practices and the experiences that derive from them have become familiar.

Training the mind in the state not disturbed by thoughts (*Mi rtog pa*) of clarity and voidness (*gSal stong*).

One applies the purification breathing to eliminate the impure breath and the impurities of the elements.

When one inhales one imagines that all our external material concepts dissolve into light.

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Thus one integrates oneself with the condition of blue space: as we inhale this condition of blue space enters into our body with the breath and pervades all throughout it. With this visualization, one holds and pushes the breathing downwards and at the same time one pulls the breathing up a little from below, blocking it both above and below and remaining in this condition. Thus there arises the experience of clarity and voidness. When one does this

practice, if the nature of one's physical body tends to be cold, or if one feels a sensation of cold, one imagines that the breathing is hot in nature; and on the contrary if the nature of one's physical body tends to be hot, or if one feels a sensation of heat, one imagines the breathing to be cool; this is useful for balancing.

This advice was given by the Master Klong chen pa³⁰.

Training the mind in the state not disturbed by thought (*Mi tog pa*) in the *Dharmata*, the nature of all phenomena.

The Statrway to Liberation states:

One relaxes completely both the body and the mind without moving one's eyes; not moving the eyes one's thought too are stilled. One remains in the state of this dimension, without forcing oneself with a particular breathing, in such a way that the *prana* and the air joined together remain in relaxed condition. This is a very profound and important system.

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On this topic the *Zhal gdams nor bu'i phreng ba*³¹ (a text of Guru Padmasambhava's advice), states:

Listen, mTsho rgyal! (mTsho rgyal is the consort of Guru Padmasambhava). Sitting with the body in the position of the lotus, pull the breathing lightly up from below and push lightly down that which is above, holding the middle breathing near the navel. The benefit, the merit of this practice is the wisdom that manifests in its dimension, this is a method to apply for this purpose. It is useful to practise it both when one visualizes the body as a divinity and when one meditates on the natural light. Applying the *prana* in this method one furthermore succeeds in maintaining and spreading the *Thig le* (the male potentiality); one automatically purifies all the mental confusion of subject and object; one liberates into the state of *rigpa* all one's mental defects and the lack of clarity caused by sleepiness and obscurations or agitation. The senses do not suffer further damage (such as aging and so on); disturbances and illnesses of phlegm and bile disappear; those who have bloating of the stomach and who produce a lot of gas will overcome these problems; all the infectious illnesses are purified, and one will not have parasites (such as lice), etc. on one's body. With this breathing the length of one's life will be increased like that of the sun and the moon.

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To apply this method of practice one manifests the dimension of one's own body like a divinity. The body remains erect, without forcing, and the breathing is held below the navel; the eyes look into space, open, and unmoving; the mind remains in the state of *Ka dag* (the state of Emptiness, pure since the beginning). This method of maintaining the breathing is called 'the application of the *prana* of total wisdom'. Sometimes it is called 'the application of the *prana* to distinguish the state of the mind from the state of *Rigpa*'.

When one applies this breathing the cavity of the body must remain a little stretched (pulled) (that is to say the stomach is slightly pushed backwards and the upper part of the body is pulled up a little; in this way one succeeds automatically). One holds the *prana* at the level of the navel *chakra* during the inhalation, the holding and the exhalation. Applying the visualization in a precise way, one pushes down and pulls up the *prana* automatically and one concentrates on this holding.

During all the process of carrying out this practice, the *chakra* of the navel is filled by this held *prana*, which also acts as the support of the heart *chakra*. If

one carries out a divinity practice one applies this practice of the *chakra* filled by this held *prana*. When one recites *mantras*, one holds the *prana* for the whole time at the level of the navel, and maintains the presence of the navel *chakra* filled with *prana*.

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Meditating (thus) one integrates the wisdom beyond thoughts with this presence of the navel *chakra* full of held *prana*. Whether one walks, is seated, or sleeps, in whatever circumstance, during all of the four moments, one tries to do things in such a way that this great secret wisdom is not lacking. Thus he said. (That is to say, thus Guru Padmasambhava advised Ye shes mtsho rgyal)".

It is necessary to understand that this type of training of the middle *prana* (*Bar rlung*) is not only applied during the training of the mind; it is a foundation for all the paths, an extremely important and perfect method for realizing Enlightenment. Thus, having trained the mind in the three states not disturbed by thoughts, one succeeds in directing and controlling one's thoughts in any circumstance whatsoever, and one dwells in a condition which, like the sky, is beyond thoughts and any concept; in this way one develops the capacity to remain in this state in a lasting manner, according to the capacities and the habits of the practitioner.

These seven types of mind training are not just something to be learned in mere words. Understanding the nature of Samsara, the sad, dark condition of suffering into which beings have fallen, one should apply them at all times and in every circumstance.

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To be specific, when one follows the instructions for practice one should try to dedicate a period of twenty one, fourteen, or at least seven days to their application, integrating them into one's own existence. Otherwise if one only listens to them as an explanation, realization will not become something concrete. Guru Padmasambhava said:

'If one does not enter concretely into the practice and is not capable of transforming the condition of Samsara and integrating oneself with the suffering and sadness of impermanence (impermanence is the nature of suffering) one does not feel disgust for Samsara, and there is not much benefit. It is as if a person who suffers from hunger and thirst should have food and drink in their hands, but did not use it. These things in themselves do not bring benefit. It is not sufficient that a person should have food and drink in their hands, they must really eat and drink them! In the same way, understanding that we are like prisoners in Samsara, one must actually apply the meaning in order to try to get out of this prison and obtain a definitive benefit.

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Thus, when the condition of the disciples is disciplined and a place for practice has been found, one should apply the six preliminary practices such as Refuge, the *sNong 'gro* and in particular the preliminary practice of the '*Khor' das ru shan*. One should proceed in this manner'.

Thus, as is clearly explained above, learning and practising these three excellent mental trainings well, one tries to cause the experience of them to arise in one's own condition. These (trainings) are fundamental for (developing) discipline and for rediscovering the peaceful condition of one's three existences. (This is the way in which one applies one of the six principal points of Klong chen pa).

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(What follows is another of the six principal points of Klong chen pa).

Developing virtues, virtuous actions, and avoiding negative actions becoming hindrances to realization.

What is meant by the word 'hindrance' is the accumulation of many negative and non-virtuous actions, whose fruit and whose potentiality is to create obstacles in the path of liberation; it is therefore indispensable to avoid such negative actions as much as possible.

(Generally, in Tibetan, this term is denoted by *sDig pa*; many people translate this as 'sin', but this is mistaken; *sDig pa* means a hindrance or obstacle to realization, and this must be clearly understood).

The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation states:

"All the happiness and the suffering of Samsara are the fruit of virtuous or negative intentions and actions: this is how they are produced.

In the *Phal po che Sutra* the *Bodhisattva* Kun tu bzang po states (Kun tu bzang po is the Tibetan name for the *Bodhisattva* Samantabhadra, who is not the Samantabhadra of the *Dharmakaya*):

'Just as different fruits develop from different seeds, so too different types of beings and their dimensions manifest from the causes created by different actions'.

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A bitter seed produces a bitter fruit, a sweet seed produces sweet fruit; it never comes about that the cause and the resulting fruit are contrary.

In the *Sutra* one reads:

'It is possible for fire to become cold, for the wind to catch a lasso, and for the sun and the moon to fall; but it is impossible to escape the fruit of karma'. Therefore, one should first of all abandon and avoid carrying out negative actions, whose consequences have already been explained. From the three poisons (mental obscuration, attachment and aversion) and the intentions linked to them there arise the negative actions that produce suffering as their result.

The *Rin chen phreng ba*, *The Necklace of Precious (Gems)* (in Sanskrit: *Ratna mala*) states:

'Through attachment, anger and ignorance one creates actions, and the actions created through them are not virtuous'. This type of action are obstacles and one can divide these actions which are hindrances into two groups, those which are more heavy and those which are less heavy".

The actions which cause hindrances are:

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"The ten non-virtuous actions; the five actions 'without interval'; the five 'near' actions to the preceding five; the four heavy actions; and the eight contrary actions.

The ten non-virtuous actions are further sub-divided into three of the body, four of the voice, and three of the mind.

The three non-virtuous actions of the body are: interrupting the life of other beings, taking things that are not given, and behaving in an impure way (the note to the text specifies: 'in the case of a monk') or having inappropriate sexual relations (the note to the text specifies: 'in the case of a devout lay person'); by this what is meant is that an ordained monk cannot have sexual relations at all and that a devout lay person can have relations with his or her consort but not with others or with persons who are already married (to someone else)). These are the three non-virtuous actions of the body.

The four non-virtuous actions of the voice are: lying, slandering, speaking in an offensive manner, speaking to no purpose.

The three non-virtuous actions of the mind are:

desire, deceiving, and a contrary mental attitude (to the meaning of the teaching). (In Tibetan *brNah sems* means wanting to take the position of another person or desiring to have something which is owned by someone else; to try in a direct or indirect way to obtain something and to be always aiming towards this goal).

The way in which one accumulates negative actions.

Taking the example of the destruction or interruption of the life of other beings which is an action linked to the body, in *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* one reads:

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"There are four conditions relating to the interruption of the lives of human beings and animals: knowing precisely that one wants to kill, to have the intention to do so, entering concretely into action, and the effective interruption of the life of that being. If all these four conditions are completed, the effect is very heavy. Such an action of killing can furthermore be of two types: carried out and accumulated, or not carried out but accumulated. What is meant by 'carried out and accumulated'? This term refers to a situation in which one feels enmity towards a person and kills them with hatred and anger, or to a similar situation in relation to wild animals or, for example, fishes, in which one kills them in the interests of one's own desires (of eating their flesh, using their skin, and so on, which are in turn actions based on attachment).

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The same term also refers to killing animals or persons in ignorance of the principle of cause and effect, basing one's intention on the three poisons and entering directly into action. An action 'not carried out but accumulated', on the other hand, refers to an indirect negative action carried out by others at one's request, or else refers to one's being satisfied by a negative action carried out directly by others".

To further clarify the meaning of this explanation one can say that when one's intention is linked to the three poisons and one feels the desire to kill, or when one asks someone else to carry out such an action on one's behalf, or when one is satisfied by the fact that someone else has killed, all these situations produce the (karmic) potentiality of a negative action.

The fruit of non-virtuous actions.

There are four principal types of fruit of non-virtuous actions: the fruit of 'matured karma'; the fruit which 'coincides with the cause';

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the fruit which 'coincides with the power'; and the fruit which 'produces the action of the individual'.

The fruit of 'matured karma' depends on the various types of intention: intentions linked to anger mature into the vision of the karma of hell, intentions linked to attachment mature into the karmic vision of the *pretas*, intentions linked to ignorance mature into the karmic vision of the animal realm: thus the different fruits are produced and one falls into the suffering of the three lower states.

On the subject of the fruit 'which coincides with the cause', *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"The fruit of matured karma is to fall into the three lower states of existence; subsequently, in accordance with the specific circumstances, the fruit of the cause can mature in such a way that the being liberates themselves from the vision of the lower states, entering into a different karmic vision. In this respect the fruit of the action which coincides with the cause and the fruit of the experience which coincides with the cause are relevant.

With regard to the first (i.e.: **the fruit of the action that coincides with the cause**) in the case of (a rebirth as) a human being, they will from a very young age show themselves to be expert in and to feel satisfaction from interrupting the lives of other beings; in the case of an animal incarnation, it might be as a hawk or perhaps a wolf, which are animals that like interrupting the lives of other animals.

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With regard to **the fruit of the experience which coincides with the cause**, in the case of human beings it comes about that as soon as they are born, they encounter death, and die in this way for a succession of many further lives; or else in the majority of cases, they tend to die young. Sometimes when the children die the parents suffer a great deal: this too is a karmic payment which results from having interrupted the lives of others in previous lifetimes.

In the same way, some people are always ill from a very young age, and suffering from different illnesses they must continually receive medical care of various kinds from their birth to their death; but when even such medical care does not bring much benefit, it is said that this is the fruit of previous lives, in which for example they have tortured animals and so on.

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The fruit which 'coincides with the power' means (a karmic consequence) matured at the objective level, such as for example being born in an unpleasant place, which is dry, or else difficult, where there is always something which puts one's life in danger'.

All these are then aspects of actions related to the body, the voice and the mind, which can manifest.

With regard to **the 'five actions without interval'**, *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"To kill one's own father, to kill one's own mother, to kill a realized being (such as an *Arhat*) or to commit negative actions with a negative intention towards a realized being (such as the Buddha) and to carry out negative actions that create discord within the community of practitioners or monks: these are the five actions without interval".

('Without interval' means that there is no interruption between death and the (ensuing) suffering. For example, in a heavy case such as (the arising of) the vision of a hell, there is nothing in between, but (after death) one immediately experiences this suffering, and furthermore it does not easily end).

'The five near actions, (actions near to those without interruption) are:

"The action near (in heaviness) to killing one's own father is that of killing a *Bodhisattva*, ; the action near to killing one's own mother is

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raping a nun, causing the breaking of her vow. The action near to killing an *Arhat* or a realized being is killing a practitioner on the path to liberation. The action near to causing discord within the community is impeding entry into the Community. The action near in seriousness to making the body of a *Tathagata* bleed with bad intention is the action of destroying *stupas*."

The 'four heavy actions':

"Further sub-divided into four groups there are sixteen in all.

One can first of all list the '**four heavy actions relating to respect**': to (wrongly) occupy the higher seat of wise persons; to receive honours from ordained monks; to receive honours from ascetics; to receive objects and wealth offered by *Tantric* practitioners.

The 'four heavy actions which damage' are: to not respect a vow; to damage the rules of discipline of the *Hinayana*; to damage the training in the *Bodhisattva* vow of the *Mahayana*; to damage the *Samaya* of the *Tantras*.

The '**four heavy actions concerning blasphemy**' are: speaking ill of Realized Beings ('*Phags pa*) through one's own mental obscuration;

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speaking ill of the truth through pride; speaking ill of the qualities of others through jealousy; accepting and rejecting divinities on the basis of sectarianism.

The '**four heavy contrary actions**' are: it is heavy in relation to equanimity to speak and boast of something, making it appear very special and important (such as for example to speak of the state of *rDzogs chen* as something very special and better (than some other teaching). Such an attitude creates limits while the real condition is beyond every type of limit).

It is heavy to act in a way that is contradictory to the real condition. It is heavy to cause the 'five (actions) without interval' (or rather, even indirectly to create those causes).

It is heavy to hold a contrary belief about the ten non-virtuous actions (that is to say to believe that it is not true that they are something negative and to maintain that they can bring good; this is a contrary way of seeing because the nature of the condition (of these actions) is negative).

The '**eight contrary actions**' are: speaking ill of positive actions; praising or speaking well of negative actions; disturbing or bothering a person who has a virtuous idea or a virtuous intention; to diminish the action of the accumulation of merit and wisdom of a devout person; to renounce or abandon the Master and the divinity (*yi dam*); to renounce or abandon the practice of transformation, or the brothers and sisters of the *Vajra*; to renounce or decide to ignore the principle of the *mandala* (when one receives a teaching of transformation there is always the principle of the practice of the related *mandala* which represents one's own dimension); to not apply or to not give due consideration to this principle is a contrary action).

These are the eight contrary actions".

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What has been said and explained so far above clarifies what the hindrances (to realization) are, and why one should avoid all these negative actions.

The necessity to develop positive actions

With regard to the necessity to develop positive actions, *The Clear Light of the Path of Liberation* states:

"In general, understanding the ten non-virtuous actions³² and their consequences well, one avoids them and takes vows to transform them into the ten common virtuous actions".

In this way any action of the body, voice, and mind carried out with good intention brings a positive fruit and brings about the development of happiness.

In the *Necklace of Precious (Gems)*³³ one reads:

"In the absence of attachment, ignorance, and anger any action becomes a virtuous action both for this life and future lives, and always brings benefit. (Thus) the actions of the three existences are the cause of reaching the higher states; therefore this is called the Path".

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and one also reads:

"The three virtuous actions related to the body are giving up the destruction of the life of others, protecting it, and in particular, redeeming the life of beings who would certainly be killed' (such as for example saving an animal that is about to be slaughtered; the benefit of this type of action is extremely great). Abandoning taking things that are not given, and practising generosity in giving things away instead; giving up inappropriate sexual conduct and following the rules of morality (which in the case of lay people means respecting through one's own free will a specific vow for a certain period of time, taking a vow even for only a single day; in the case of those who have taken monastic ordination this means always observing their vows).

The four virtuous actions of the voice are: giving up telling lies, and telling the truth instead; giving up slandering and instead creating harmony between people; giving up insulting others and speaking instead in a calm and peaceful way; giving up chattering meaninglessly and instead reciting (*mantra* or prayers) or speaking of things which have meaning and are useful.

The three virtuous actions of the mind are: giving up negative intentions towards others; being satisfied with what one has; and giving up wickedness and negative intentions and instead trying to understand others;

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giving up the 'contrary way of seeing' and following instead a correct way of seeing. These are the three virtuous actions of the mind and all together they are ten'.

The fruit of virtuous actions.

There exist three types of fruit: the virtuous fruit 'that corresponds to merit'; the virtuous fruit 'whose cause corresponds to the action', and the virtuous fruit 'whose cause corresponds to the experience'.

The virtuous fruit 'that corresponds to merit':

"If it is a matter of a little merit, this becomes a cause for rebirth with a human vision; if it is a medium merit, this becomes a cause for rebirth as an *Asura*; if the merit is great, this becomes the cause of a rebirth as a divinity of the world of passions. Above these there is that which is called 'action without movement': applying *Samadhi*, the calm state of meditation, one can obtain a rebirth as a divinity of the higher sphere known as the 'formless'³⁴ (realm).

The fruit 'whose cause corresponds to the action':

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In whatever place and circumstance one is reborn, the desire to carry out virtuous actions is always greater than the intention to carry out negative actions'.

The fruit 'whose cause corresponds to the experience':

"Giving up killing, interrupting the lives of animals or torturing animals, causes one to enjoy a long life and one has less illnesses; giving up stealing and taking the things that are not given one becomes rich and is not disturbed by enemies and thieves; if one gives up inappropriate sexual conduct, one enjoys

a pleasant, beautiful, and good companion, and furthermore one is not disturbed by enemies; if one gives up telling lies, everyone is kind to one and offers one praise; avoiding or giving up slandering others, one is served and respected by others; giving up insulting others, one becomes famous; giving up speaking in a senseless way, others respect and consider important that which one says;

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giving up prevailing over others or desiring the possessions of others, one realizes easily all one's desires; giving up bad intentions one is not disturbed by others; abandoning a mistaken way of seeing, there arises in one's own state a correct way of seeing".

All these explanations permit one to quickly understand the meaning. If one should wish to go more deeply into the details there are numerous texts that contain the words of the Buddha, the *Sutras*, and also the words of many disciples of the Buddha, those related to the lineage of Masters, the writings of scholars and realized beings; all describe the benefit of liberation, the consequences of Samsara, the law of cause and effect, virtuous and non-virtuous actions; there are different types of explanation that one can study and go more deeply into.

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(What follows is another of the six principal points of Klong chen pa).

Developing devotion and faith maintaining and respecting a moral way of behaving.

(*ngo tsha* and '*kbrel*' are usually spoken of in this context. *Ngo tsha* means feeling shame; '*kbrel*' means being careful not to do something bad because one fears the negative judgement of others).

Having or not having a sense of shame ('*kbrel*') depends on whether one really believes or does not really believe in the principle of cause and effect.

If one does not really believe in the principle of cause and effect one thinks only of one's own benefit, of one's own gain and of the realization of one's own desires. (In such a case,) if one collaborates with others, one does so only for one's own personal interest, and all the actions one carries out are only motivated by this interest; thus one does not have *ngo tsha* and '*kbrel*'.

Someone who does, on the other hand, believe in cause and effect is not able to carry out any action without respecting the principle (of *karma*); and even if in some way he is forced to (not respect the principle) through secondary causes, he always feels a sense of guilt, and acknowledging (the validity of) this principle always feels shame. Furthermore, knowing that he is carrying out a mistaken action,

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but still continuing in it, he will end up feeling ashamed of himself; this is how an individual who has '*kbrel*' is. In the *sutra* the Buddha explained all the *Dharma* of cause and effect. If one believes in all that he explained and one trains one's mind even a little in these principles, one will certainly feel shame, and will be unable not to feel restraint.

Those who lack *ngo tsha* and '*kbrel*' are always proud, they always feel very important and it is as if they live in a castle made out of pride; they do not recognize the virtuous Master or the virtuous companions, and do not feel a similar intention;

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in this way devotion and the desire to follow the Teaching cannot arise. The Master Klongchen pa has clearly stated:

'*Ngo tsha* and '*kbrel*' are the basis that cause devotion to arise'.

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The method for developing faith and devotion.

In *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* (by Adzam Drugpa) one reads:

“Faith or devotion is one of the seven precious or regal³⁵ attributes; it is as indispensable as the wheel is to a carriage; it is like the precious wheel which day and night causes virtuous people to act. Faith is one of the seven principal riches of the *Bodhisattvas*³⁶ and brings both provisional and definitive benefits, according to one’s desire; it is like a precious jewel which is the source of all qualities; it is like a foot which enables us to walk on the path to liberation and the path of omniscience; it is like the hand which enables us to gather all the virtuous *dharmas*.”

The Treasure of Qualities or *Yonton mdzod*³⁷ (by Jigmed Linpa) states:

‘Faith is like riches, like a treasure, like the foot and the hand, the root which gathers all virtues’.

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Faith or devotion is fundamental to following the pure Teaching; to be specific, it is the essence of the Refuge. It is important to have a profound faith and devotion.

The *sutra* states:

‘Those who have faith and devotion are appreciated by the *Bodhisattvas* and the Realized beings in the same way that a good field is appreciated’.

Guru Padmasambhava said:

‘One who has devotion and total trust receives the empowerment. The practitioner receives the empowerment according to the level of his devotion, which can be supreme medium, or inferior. It is impossible to receive the empowerment if one does not possess faith’.

In the *Sutra* one reads:

‘Just as a burnt seed can never produce a green plant, those who do not feel faith can never cause virtuous and positive *dharmas* to arise’.

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Furthermore, Guru Padmasambhava also said:

‘A person without faith is like a cave turned towards the north, which can never receive the sun’s rays’.

(This example refers to places like India and Tibet; in the case of places like Argentina or Australia, the opposite direction would apply). To be specific, those who practise the Development and Completion Stages of the *Vajrayana* and the state of *rDzogs chen* without faith, destroy the possibility of reaching the obtainments or of enjoying the riches. The same happens if there are negative causes present and if one holds a contrary vision to the principles of the Teaching, or if one doubts the Teaching itself.

Those who are interested in the Teaching should not separate themselves from it, and should have a sincere devotion; in this way they can rapidly obtain all the empowerments and reach all the obtainments; this is the principal cause, a cause without error; faith is like a universal medicine which cures all ills. This principle can be clearly understood from reading the biographies and the stories of the realized Masters of the past who lived in India and in Tibet.

In the text *Jam 'dpal zhing bkod*³⁸ one reads:

‘All *dharmas* are secondary causes and these depend on intentions’.

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Guru Padmasambhava said:

‘I, Padmasambhava, shall always be present to all those men and women who have faith. In my life, death does not exist. For this reason I shall always be present to every individual who has faith’.

Real knowledge of the condition of all phenomena depends on faith and devotion alone.

The *Sutra* says:

'Son of Shari, Sariputra, the absolute sacred truth can only be understood through faith'.

The basis of the Path consists therefore in having a very stable faith. In this sense the various types of faith or devotion which become the cause of virtue are not different. But if one wants

to build a true basis for the Path to Liberation, what type of faith should one have? It is important to understand this point well.

With regard to the different types of faith or devotion, the *bDen gnyis xing rta* (*The Chariot of the Two Truths*) a text written by the Master 'Jigs med gling pa) states:

"The faith of pure intention: pure devotion and satisfaction arise in a person who sees and understands the characteristics of the Teaching, the morality of holy persons, their intelligence, their production of virtuous actions. This type of faith derives from the pleasure (such individuals feel) and also a little from attachment.

The faith of desire arises in someone who, understanding the truth of suffering and its characteristics well, is afraid of the wheel of birth and death and understands that to save himself from this condition there exists the truths of the sacred Teaching, of the cessation of suffering, and of the Path. The person who teaches these principles is a Master, and someone who is interested in him feels a devotion which is similar to the pleasure bees find in flowers.

Faith or devotion based on belief arises in those who understand well the qualities and the benefits which derive from the Three Jewels; they believe that the Three Jewels do not mislead one, whether one is a normal person or a realized being, until one finds peace in one's own mind; and the resulting happiness is considered to be (experienced) by the grace of the Three Jewels. Furthermore, they believe without any doubt that any kind of suffering and even the state of *Arhat*, are linked to one's own karmic condition.

The faith of a person who does not turn back again is like salt which has dissolved in water and does not turn to salt again.

In whatever circumstance a person like this finds himself, he studies, examines, practises meditation and goes into retreat. If he is ill, if he suffers, if he is disturbed by enemies, by provocations of negative energies, or by contrary secondary causes or if he undergoes very strong interruptions, he nevertheless always maintains this faith very strongly.

In ancient times in India, a Buddhist who had taken the lay vows (*dGe bsnyen*), after having been captured by a group of followers of mistaken paths, the *Mu stegs pas*, was ordered to renounce the divinity and his own

way of seeing, and to convert to theirs, on pain of death. The *Upasaka* said: "With words I say that I will do whatever you wish, but with my heart I will not do it; I do not renounce". Having said this, he took his own life. This is an example of faith that does not turn back.

The first two types of faith just described arise in beginners and it is easy for them to be altered by secondary causes. The other two are on the other hand types of faith or devotion that one can hope to develop and maintain in a correct way".

These explanations clarify the nature of faith and devotion, why it is necessary to have them, and what the differences between them are. Understanding these principles one can enter into the knowledge of the base of the Path of the Teaching.

(What follows deals with another of the six principle points of Klon chen pa).

Following a Master and Virtuous Companions.

As is written in the *Chartot of the Two Virtues (bDen gnyis dig rta)* (by Jigmed Linpa):

"The disciple Ananda asked the Buddha: "Do Virtuous Masters and virtuous companions perhaps make up half the factors for (arriving at) realization?" The Buddha replied: "Ananda, don't speak in that way: Masters and virtuous companions are all and everything for realization. Everything that must arise, does so through following Masters;

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following Masters one attains liberation".

Realization (*Tshangs pa*) is Nirvana itself. Following the Master and the virtuous companions becomes the Path. This action brings the fruit of the realization of peace.

The Master Aryadeva said:

'Whoever follows a virtuous Master can realize himself completely; Buddha Shakyamuni explained that this is so. For this reason one should follow wise persons; whoever follows wise persons can attain peace. Every kind of understanding, from Refuge right up to total realization, arises through distinguishing what is virtuous from what is not virtuous, through distinguishing that which is *dharmā* from that which just seems to be *dharmā*, and from following the Master.'

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For example, if in a great forest of medicinal plants such as exists on Mount Rimalaya there should fall a branch of normal wood, the aroma emanating from the sandal wood trees would integrate with that branch of normal wood, which would then be mistaken for sandalwood. In the same way normal people are like a branch of dry wood, full of the thorns of all the passions; their nature is not calm but is rigid, and they fail to distinguish what should be done from what should be given up; even though they should offer gifts, they remain miserly because they are dominated from birth by attachment; they do not have any capacity to bear anything. They consider the path to be that which is not the path. They consider realization to be that which is not realization. They do not emit the fragrance of morality, and do not possess the qualities of *samadhi*, of contemplation. But, if even people such as these, who are more similar to animals, to bulls (than to humans), should decide to follow a wise Master, they (too) will have the possibility of entering into his Path.

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The son of a Brahmin had killed nine hundred and ninety nine persons and had then cut off their finger nails to make a necklace; to reach a total of one thousand he killed his own mother, and on top of that he was trying to kill the Buddha too. But when the Buddha explained the *Dharma* to him, (even) he began to follow the Teachings, and came to understand the truth.

Among the teachings of the *Vinaya* one can read:

'Just as on the Sala tree, which is a very tall tree, there can grow a climbing plant (a climbing plant does not have very much strength of its own with which to grow, but through leaning on a support can arrive right to the top), thus too, through following a wise person, one can embrace all that is good'.

Those who follow a Teaching and who are on the Path should therefore associate with Masters and virtuous companions practising the Path. And since one can create non-virtuous actions if one does not act in this way, it is necessary to always keep this awareness present. This is a secondary cause that is very important for the Path.

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Chapter Three

The Vow and the training of Refuge.

There are two types of Refuge: provisional and definitive.

One can take refuge provisionally to protect, either directly or indirectly, one's own body, voice or mind, in order not to be disturbed by human beings or non-human beings, by magic forces, and so on, such as when it rains very hard and one shelters in a cave or under a tree. This type of refuge is provisional.

All the problems that arise, even those which last only a moment, arise from dualism; this dualism is the origin of the ocean of Samsara. The definitive Refuge is the pure Path, which saves one from the ocean of Samsara.

The Master, the Buddha, the Teaching and those who follow them and who help in the practising of this Path are the Three Precious Jewels, the field in which one takes Refuge.

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The true principle of Refuge consists in having the pure intention to seek liberation, to follow the Teaching and enter into the Path. According to the *Hinayana* system, (the taking of) Refuge is accompanied by a vow, which is called the Refuge vow; in the *Mahayana* system, on the other hand there is the training in Refuge. Combining these two aspects, one sometimes speaks of the vow and the training of Refuge. There are therefore two different systems. Many people consider the taking of Refuge to be the sign that one has entered into Buddhism.

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The Vow of Refuge in the *Hinayana*.

After Buddha Shakyamuni set the wheel of the *dharma* in motion for the first time and taught the 'Four Noble Truths'³⁹ (the truths of suffering, the original cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to this cessation), a system of vows was established for ordinary people, with the aim of controlling or stopping the habits that tend to create negativity. Because the conditions of individuals are different, the types of vow are also different. The *Vinaya* recognizes seven types of vows:

- 1 & 2) complete ordination or principal vows (*dGe slong*) for men and women;
- 3 & 4) secondary vows (*dGe tshul*) for men and women;
- 5 & 6) lay vows (*dGe bsnyen*) for men and women;
- 7) and the particular vow of *dGe slob ma* for women.

Among the lay vows there is also the vow known as *bsNyen gnas*⁴⁰, 8) the vow which one keeps for just one day.

Whoever follows the Vehicle of the Cause, or the Path of Renunciation, must keep one of these eight types of vow. This is considered the base (or foundation).

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Through these vows one controls one's body, voice and mind and avoids committing negative actions. Thus one attains realization through the Path of the Cessation of all that arises from negative actions which, together with the passions and the emotions are considered to be the cause of Samsara and the enemies of realization.

For this reason the Master dByig gNyen (in Sanskrit Vasubhandu) states:

"One should base oneself on morality, listen, analyze and practise meditation".

The indispensable foundation of these three, of all the *Dharmas* of the Path and of liberation is therefore the vow of morality. Someone who has taken the vow of Refuge in the Three Jewels, who recognizes the Three Jewels as the field of Refuge and who maintains the lay vows is called a *dGe bsNyen*. These eight types of vow of the *Vinaya* are strictly linked with the three existences of individuals who follow the Path and in

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particular (do so) with the (level of the) existence of the physical body. Some types of vow are thus taken for the whole of one's life, and some just for the duration of one day.

These vows must be taken in the presence of a Master.

Those who follow the path of *Tantrism*, which is the Path of Transformation, or the Path of Self Liberation of the Primordial State do not necessarily take vows as is done in the *Hinayana*; recognizing that the essence of the vow is the understanding of the consequences of suffering in Samsara and that the principle is that of not disturbing others, such practitioners constantly apply a moral control of their own existence (without the need for a vow).

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The training in Refuge in the *Mahayana*

According to the *Mahayana* system, a practitioner can take Refuge directly imagining in front of himself the presence of the field of Refuge that is the ocean of *Tathagatas*. But even if one does not take any other vows beyond the Refuge Vow, it is important to maintain awareness and pure presence, avoiding creating problems and disturbances, and on the contrary, seeking to benefit others. This moral principle is the true basis for conduct, both in the Path of Self Liberation of the Primordial State, and in the Path of Transformation of *Tantra*.

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In the *Mahayana* vows real and proper like those found in the *Vinaya* are not to be found, because the system is completely different from that of the *Hinayana*. Practitioners of the *Mahayana* must have seven qualities that are higher than the *Hinayana*:

intention, way of application, wisdom, diligence, method, purity, and capacity of attention.

Avoiding disturbing others through controlling oneself with the application of morality and training oneself through applying the benefit of others are two quite different principles. For this reason the vow of the *Mahayana* is defined as a *Mahayana* vow, since it is governed by intention.

Basing oneself on this principle of the Vow and the training of the Refuge in the vehicle of the *Bodhisattvas* one can develop in the same way the eight vows recognized in the *Hinayana*.

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The study of the systems found in the four principal schools⁴¹ enables one to understand how what is found in the *Vinaya* as the rules of morality finds its expression in the *Mahayana*. Originally in the *Mahayana* system only the term *bsLab pa*, training, was used, while (the term) for a vow true and proper, *sDom pa* was not found. A vow must be maintained purely, even at the cost of one's own life. A training, on the other hand, is based on the good or bad intention of the practitioner and depends on (responding to) necessity. Consequently the ways in which one can train oneself are different. There is therefore a notable difference between *bsLab pa* and *sDom pa*. The Master Atisa and many others have explained that the base and the root of the *Hinayana* morality is that of giving up disturbing others,

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while the morality of the *Mahayana* is based on the training, or rather on putting oneself at the disposition of others to benefit them. These are the two fundamental aspects that distinguish the two Vehicles. They are defined in this way because the basis of the intention is different in a vow and in a training, and one can understand this automatically.

The system of Refuge.

Taking Refuge is recognized to be the fundamental basis of the Teaching, both in the Vehicle of the Cause and in the Path of Transformation of the *Mantrayana*, and also in the Path of Self Liberation, which is considered to be the most rapid and the most profound.

Understanding this, one follows the principle of the Refuge with the training, and one carries this knowledge into one's own state and integrates it with it.

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How should one take Refuge?

There is a reply to this question in *The Advice of the Master Padma*:

"The *Nirmanakaya* Master said: 'mTsho rgyal, the Three Jewels are the basis of all the *dharmas*; the method for overcoming birth and death is linked to the Refuge'.

Yeshes mTsho rgyal asked: 'What is the meaning of the word Refuge? How many types of Refuge are there?'

Guru Padmasambhava replied: 'The essence of Refuge is the desire to attain supreme realization, making this commitment with compassion. The meaning of the word Refuge is as follows: one takes Refuge to overcome the fear of rebirth in the three lower states and to save oneself from the inferior ways of seeing of the mistaken paths, such as that of the *Mu stegs pas*, which are based on the existence of a permanent entity (or self).

There are three types of Refuge: external, internal, and secret'.

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Yeshes mTso rgyal asked: 'With regard to the external Refuge, what cause can make it arise? In whom should one take Refuge? What type of person can take Refuge? In what way? And with what intention?' Guru Padmasambhava replied: 'The cause that makes Refuge arise is believing that the Three Jewels bring salvation from the suffering of Samsara; and the fear of suffering; one recognizes the Three Jewels as the Field of Refuge and one takes Refuge with one's three existences, because one believes that only the omniscient Buddha is capable of saving beings from the cycle of birth and death.

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Taking Refuge in the Buddha - who is beyond any defect and who has all the perfected qualities - in his Teaching, and in those who maintain it - the *Sangha* - it is possible to exhaust the cycle of birth and death both for oneself and for others. Therefore this is the only field of Refuge.

Who takes Refuge? One who has the desire to do so, who has respect and devotion, and who remembers the qualities of the Three Jewels. Refuge can arise if one has these three intentions: the wish to learn and train from this moment on, having transmigrated since beginningless time; the recognition that the mistaken paths and the worldly divinities are not the (true) field of Refuge;

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the recognition that the sole field of supreme Refuge is the omniscient Buddha who has all the qualities.

In what way does one take Refuge? Through the three gates of the body, voice and mind; out of fear of Samsara and the three lower states; believing in the power of the Three Jewels and having a stable faith and compassion. With what intention should one take Refuge? Principally making the commitment to benefit others. One does not perfect oneself completely or realize oneself only renouncing transmigration or desiring to obtain the fruit of Nirvana. It is necessary to take Refuge with the intention of

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liberating from the suffering of Samsara not only oneself but also all the sentient beings of the three worlds, right up to total realization'. Again Yeshes mTso rgyal asked the *Nirmanakaya* Master Padmasambhava: 'With regard to the inner Refuge, in whom should one take it? What type of person can take Refuge? In what way? With what intention? For how long? For what reason? What is the aim, and what benefit can one obtain?' Padmasambhava said: 'In the internal Refuge the field of Refuge is the Master, the manifested divinity, and the *Dakinis*. All those who follow the Path of the *Tantras* can take this Refuge, with body, voice and mind; with devotion, desire and respect.

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The intention with which one takes the Refuge (in this case) is to recognize one's own Master as the true Buddha, and not to abandon the *Yidam* - the divinity - even at the cost of one's life, to honour and always make offerings to the *Dakinis* (which is to say one takes Refuge in acknowledging the *Guru*, *Devas* and *Dakinis*). Thus one takes the internal Refuge.

The time: one takes Refuge from the moment in which one has received initiation and one begins to cultivate the *Bodhicitta* right up until one reaches the total realization of Vajradhara.

The cause: one takes Refuge when devotion and the desire to practise the Path of the *Vajrayana* arise. The reason for, or the benefit of taking Refuge are that (through it) one becomes suited to receiving the teachings of the *Tantras* and related empowerments'.

Again Yeshes mTsho rgyal asked the Master: 'With regard to the secret Refuge, in whom should one take it? What type of person can take it. In what way? With what intention? For how long?

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With what causes? What is the reason and the benefit of taking Refuge?' The Master Padmasambhava said: 'The field of the secret Refuge is the View (*Ita ba*), the Meditation (*sGom pa*), and the Attitude (*sPyod pa*). Those who have superior capacity and the desire to realize themselves completely take Refuge (in this way). One takes the secret Refuge through the View (*Ita ba*), the Meditation (*sGom pa*), and the Attitude (*sPyod pa*). (For the View, it is necessary to have the capacity to find the real meaning which is arrived at through the experience of contemplation integrated with the capacity of the Attitude).

One takes Refuge with an intention that is free of a point of view dominated by desire or the hope (*Re ba*) of attaining realization and enlightenment, or of worry (*Dogs pa*) about abandoning Samsara, because these always become an obstacle. To find oneself in the state it is necessary to go beyond both these limits. The motivation is that of obtaining total realization in this lifetime'.

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This is the explanation Guru Rinpoche gave".

With these explanations one can therefore clearly understand the characteristics of the internal, external and secret Refuge.

The actual method for taking Refuge.

A.

In an instant the energy of the perfection of one's own primordial state (*gDangs*) manifests as a white luminous letter A, together with its sound, at the centre of one's body, in one's heart, in a *Thig le* or sphere of five colours. From this A, which is the symbol of our devotion, infinite rays of light spread out in all directions and activate the wisdom and the promises of the ocean of Buddhas, Masters, *Rig dzin* (Knowledge Holders) and Enlightened beings. One then invites the great master, the *Maha Guru*

Padmasambhava, who appears in space in front of one in a dimension of five coloured lights, as if he was really present: he is adorned in the three secret seats (head, throat and heart) with the three 'syllables of the *Vajra*' OM A HUM; all one's own Masters, the *Rig 'dzin*, and the realized beings, in their dimension of body, voice and mind, with their potentiality and their wisdom, are unified in the three syllables.

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In this way the presence of the Master now becomes the union of all the *Tathagatas* and Masters. In front of the Refuge tree, in which, like clouds massing in the sky, the three roots are present - Masters, *yidams* in peaceful and wrathful forms, and *dakinis*, etc. - we ourselves are present together with all the infinite numbers of sentient beings, beginning with those with whom we have established some sort of relationship, whether it be good or bad. With the intention to take Refuge all together, from now until we reach total realization, one recites '*Namo guru bhya*', which is the essence of Refuge, called 'that which is sufficient for one hundred'. Or it is enough to recite in Tibetan '*Bla ma la skyabs su mchi'o*', (I take refuge in the Master): these words are sufficient for taking Refuge.

On this subject in *The Advice of the Master Orgyan Padma* one can read:

"Even if there exist thousands of Buddhas, the Master is the most important,

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because all the Buddhas of the epochs have become Buddhas following a Master. Before the existence of a Master, there did not exist even the name 'Buddha'. And furthermore: 'The Master is the Buddha, the Master is the *dharm*a, and equally the Master is the *sangha*: he is the root of the Three Jewels. If one neglects any offering, but honours the Master perfectly, satisfying him, then all one's desires will be fulfilled"

In the *Vajrayana* system and *rDzogs chen* the Master is (seen as) the Buddha Vajradhara (in person), and that which the Master teaches is the Path. This is the true *Dharma*.

One finds in the (visual) aspect of these Paths all the *Sambhogakaya* manifestations of the divinities (visualized) for transformation, in peaceful, wrathful and joyous form, the Guardians and the *Dakinis* who are the protectors or the owners of the Teaching (who are the deep and rapid path for obtaining realization), surrounded by the different types of manifestations of guardians and their assistants.

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Together with these manifestations one finds the brothers and sisters of the *Vajra - Dakas* and *Dakinis* - linked by a promise; these are truly speaking the *Sangha*. One takes Refuge saying '*NAMO GURU BHYA, NAMO DEVA BHYA, NAMO DAKINI BHYA*'.

If on the other hand one wants to have the presence of the visualization of the ocean of the field of Refuge with two qualifications, one can take Refuge reciting the following verses of the Master Klong chen pa:

In the dimension of the sky,
(appears) a space which is full of masters, *yidams*, *dakas* and *dakinis*;
I and all beings, with devotion, take Refuge
in the Buddha, the *dharm*a, and the noble *Sangha*.

One repeats this three, five or seven times, according to the possibilities.

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Even if in the lesser vehicle there is a system of receiving the vow or the training of Refuge from a Master in a specific ritual ceremony, one can also receive the vow without there being a ritual.

In this regard the *bDen gnyis shing rta* states:

"Those who do not depend on rituals can take Refuge with the mind and with their intention directly from the Three Jewels (or Three Roots). The Refuge without rituals is defined thus because one takes Refuge with a single minded intention without ritual, notwithstanding the fact that in addition to the mind, body and voice also exist."

"After having taken Refuge, one remains relaxed, finding oneself in the state of *Prajna*, which is the state beyond concepts. This is the absolute Refuge which one receives from the *Dharmata*, the condition of phenomena beyond the worldly sphere. This is the cause of the essential Refuge without error".

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This second quotation from the *Drin lan bSab pa Sutra*⁴² enables one to further understand the meaning.

The training in the Refuge.

In the training in the Refuge there are rules relating to renunciation, application, and to considerations similar to these two.

With regard to renunciation, *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"In the *Sutras*, taking Refuge in the Buddha one becomes a pure *dGe bsnyen* (*Upasaka*) and one renounces every other kind of worldly divinity.

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Taking Refuge in the *Dharma* one tries to avoid disturbing other beings. And even if one should dream of causing a disturbance to another being, one confesses and purifies it.

Taking Refuge in the *Sangha*, one does not keep company any longer with those who follow mistaken paths, and one does not form friendships with those who, in their way of seeing and their conduct, are contrary to the Teaching of the Buddha and in particular contrary to one's own Master".

With regard to the Practice:

"After having taken Refuge in the Buddha, one respects any object, even a tiny piece of a broken statue, regarding it as if it were a jewel of the Buddha. After having taken Refuge in the *Dharma*, one respects the Teaching, the texts and every word linked to the *Dharma*.

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After having taken Refuge in the *Sangha*, one respects and does not ruin even a tiny piece of cotton coloured yellow, and one trains in this pure vision".

The aspect of the similar and three-fold considerations:

"One should consider the Master who teaches one what one should and should not do to be the true Buddha; one respects even his shadow avoiding stepping on it, serving him and honouring him; one tries always to do all that the Master asks, considering that every Teaching given by the Master is *Dharma*; one tries always to respect him and not to contradict him.

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One considers all the disciples of the Master to be *Sangha* and *Vajra* friends, trying not to displease them even for an instant with one's own actions of body, voice and mind".

The benefits of Refuge.

In the text *The Clear Light of Liberation* one reads:

"Taking Refuge is the basis of all the *dharmas*. Even only taking Refuge one can receive benefits, because it is as if seeds of liberation were sown (in one), and one is removed from non-virtuous *dharmas*. Developing virtue, this becomes the basis of the three vows, the source of all qualities. One receives protection, even at the provisional level, from the field of Refuge

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and from all the divinities that are protectors of all that is positive; one realizes every desire and the vision of the Three Jewels is always present; one remembers many past lives and one obtains infinite benefits for the present life and future lives.

Even simply listening to the sound of the Buddha or having a minimal relationship with the supports of the body, voice and mind of the Enlightened beings, one is enabled to sow seeds of liberation in the condition of sentient beings and one can obtain the fruit of provisional and definitive happiness, with infinite benefits. In conclusion, in the *Dri ma med pa Sutra*⁴³ one reads: 'If one wanted to give a form to the merit and the benefit of someone who has taken Refuge, even space itself would not be large enough to contain it'.

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In the text *Phar Phyin bsDus pa*⁴⁴ one reads:

'If one wanted to give a form to the merit of someone who has taken Refuge, the dimension of the three worlds would be too small to contain it; the ocean is the container of all the waters, and cannot be measured with a cup' (that is to say, just as one cannot measure the water contained in the ocean, neither can one measure the merit of someone who has taken Refuge, because it is immeasurable).

The *Nyi ma'i snyin po Sutra*⁴⁵ one states:

'Thousands of demons could not kill a sentient being who has taken Refuge in the Buddha; and even if his morality should become decadent and his mind become disturbed, he will go beyond birth in Samsara'.

Thus the infinite benefits possessed by one who has taken Refuge are clearly explained.

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Chapter Four

The Cultivation of *Bodhicitta*.

There are different ways of developing *Bodhicitta*. *The Clear Light of the Path of Liberation* states:

Considering the different mental capacities of individuals, one can distinguish three ways of developing *Bodhicitta*:

1. Like a navigator, the commander of a ship, or a king, which is to say, first liberating oneself, with the intention of later saving others and carrying them to liberation;
2. Like a ferryman, liberating both oneself and others together;
3. Like a shepherd, that is to say delaying liberating oneself until all sentient beings are realized.

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On the path of accumulation and application one cultivates the *Bodhicitta* called *Mos pa spyod pa* (that is to say, applied according to one's own wish, even if one lacks the concrete capacity); from the First to the Seventh *Bhumi* one cultivates the *Lbag bsam rnam dag* (of pure intention) *Bodhicitta*; in the Three Pure *Bhums* (that is, the eighth, ninth, and tenth), one cultivates the *rNam par smin pa Bodhicitta* (which is like a result matured by causes). At the level of realization of the Buddha, the cultivation of *Bodhicitta* is totally purified of obstacles.

Thus there are four ways of cultivating *Bodhicitta*.

As far as the essence of *Bodhicitta* is concerned, one can distinguish absolute and relative *Bodhicitta*.

In the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* one can read:

'In the same way that there is a difference between the desire to travel and actually traveling, a wise person gradually understands the difference between these two (types of *Bodhicitta*)'.

The first is like a person who feels the intention to travel and decides to do it to obtain and conclude something. Related to this there are what are called the four immeasurable methods for the cultivation of *Bodhicitta*.

And furthermore, just as a person actually walks along the path, one applies the six *Paramitas* in the same way,

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and trains in them.

Both (the *Bodhicitta* of) intention and (the *Bodhicitta* of) application are part of the relative *Bodhicitta*.

The absolute *Bodhicitta*, on the other hand, is the understanding of the real meaning of voidness, of the wisdom beyond every concept, and the real condition of all existences, which derives from having trained for a long time in the cultivation of *Bodhicitta* on the Path of accumulation and application.

The relative *Bodhicitta* can be received and obtained through a ritual. The absolute *Bodhicitta* is understood and attained through meditation and application".

Some systems maintain that the relative *Bodhicitta* must necessarily be received through a ritual. This is called the 'System of the Vast Behaviour or Attitude', *rGya chen spyod pa*, and it is related to the transmission of the Master Maitreya.

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In the common Vehicle, this way of receiving the *Bodhicitta* from Masters through ritual can be seen in the (way) vows (are received through ritual) in the *Hinayana*. It is also possible to receive and cultivate the relative *Bodhicitta* without carrying out a

ritual: this is called the 'System of the Profound View', and it derives from the Master Nagarjuna and from the lineage of his disciples.

In the text *Jam dpal Zhing bkod* one reads:

"All *dharmas* depend on causes, therefore everything depends on intentions"

In the *Mahayana* teaching, the basis of every training is linked to the individual's intention; the method is therefore linked with this way of seeing.

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How can one cultivate the relative *Bodhicitta* without a ritual?

First of all, as witness to one's intention to want to cultivate *Bodhicitta*, one imagines the field of Refuge as being present in front of oneself. With this visualized presence before us, we ourselves together with all the infinite numbers of sentient beings, take Refuge with the desire to cultivate *Bodhicitta*, right up until we reach final realization. With this intention, one uses the words found in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*:

"Until total realization,
we take Refuge in the Buddha,
the *Dharma*, and the *Bodhisattvas*."

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Followed by:

"Just as the Realized Beings of the past
generated the altruistic aspiration to Enlightenment,
so too we will train and learn to cultivate *Bodhicitta*.
Just as they gradually followed the Path,
we too will cultivate *Bodhicitta*
in order to benefit all sentient beings,
and we will train gradually in all the principles linked to it."

One recites these words thinking of their meaning with one's mind. After having cultivated the relative *Bodhicitta* with a sense of joy, one meditates in the following way, as described in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*:

"With this life a fruit has ripened
through which I have obtained a precious human rebirth.
Today I have been born in the Family of the Buddha,
and have become a son of the Buddha, a *Bodhisattva*.
From now on, in every way,
I will carry out activities befitting this Family,
(benefiting others and applying
the actions of a *Bodhisattva* instead of selfish actions);
I will not disturb the attributes of this faultless Family,
but will apply them".
(One makes a promise to do this)

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One trains one's mind with the meaning of these words.

Visualizing and concentrating on the joy of others.
In this regard one says:

"Today, in the presence of all the saviours
who I take as my witnesses,
I have invited all beings
to the realization of the *Tathagatas*.
May the gods and the semi-gods all rejoice in this!"

The meaning of this phrase is expressed in the commentary to the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* called *The Drop of Nectar*.

"Who invited all beings? I did.
 From when? From today?
 In what way? Taking the Saviours,
 such as Buddha Shakyamuni
 and all the *Bodhisattvas* as witness.
 Who is invited? All sentient beings,
 as vast in number as the sky is infinite.

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What do I offer with this invitation?
 The happiness of the definitive realization of the *Tathagatas*, and until this has
 been obtained, the benefits of provisional happiness and rebirth in the three
 higher states of existence of the gods, the semi-gods, and the human beings.
 In this way, those who dominate the pure dimensions, the seventy five
*Mahakalas*⁴⁶, and those who control the positive, whether they are gods or
 semi-gods, will all be happy. Thus one meditates with joy. Satisfying such
 beings with a similar benefit, one accumulates merits and obtains protection.
 Calling all these beings as witness, those who cultivate *Bodhicitta* but do not
 maintain it will feel shame or restraint".

These explanations clarify the way in which one cultivates the relative *Bodhicitta*, how
 one maintains and develops this principle, and the secondary causes for the practice.

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The *rNal 'byor grub pa'i lung*⁴⁷, root text of the *Anuyoga*, contains a phrase used by
 the Master Klong chen pa, which is considered to be the basis for the method for
 cultivating *Bodhicitta*:

"*bDag dang mtha' yas sems can kun*
Ye nas sangs rgyas yin par la
Yin par shes pa'i bdag nyid du
Byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed do.
 I and all sentient beings
 am from the beginning enlightened:
 understanding that this is our inherent nature,
 we dwell in that state.
 This is the supreme cultivation of *Bodhicitta*".

This means that one trains oneself in integrating into one's own condition. Repeating
 the words and meditating on the meaning, one cultivates *Bodhicitta* with one's
 intention and in one's way of doing things.

Developing the *Bodhicitta* of Intention (*sMon pa*).

The principal training in the *Bodhicitta* of intention involves training oneself in the
 practise of immeasurable compassion, immeasurable benevolence, immeasurable
 joy, and immeasurable impartiality.
 These are the Four Immeasurable Intentions. One has to try to integrate and train
 oneself in these principles.

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The way of training the mind in the Four Immeasurable Intentions.

The Clear Light of the Path of Liberation states:

"The first of the four immeasurable intentions is compassion; but before
 putting it into practice it is necessary to train oneself in the application of
 impartiality; otherwise, if one has not trained in this it is not easy for

compassion or benevolence to arise, and on the contrary, one can create limits".

Immeasurable Impartiality.

"With regard to this the Master Indrabhuti said:

'Among the infinite beings of the heavens, there does not exist one who has not been our father or our mother'. Immeasurable impartiality is a means for pacifying of our attachment and our hatred.

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Just as the Masters of times past did, we train ourselves in impartiality towards all beings towards whom we feel attachment, aversion and ignorance, whether they are friends, enemies, or people in relation to whom we are neutral.

With this intention, one first of all imagines a person whom one does not like, or with whom one is in disagreement, who usually provokes agitation and anger in us. One then thinks that this person has alternately been our father or mother, our friend or our enemy, an infinite number of times.

In the present also, our illusory vision and the attachment to visions, the *dharmas* (phenomena) and the aggregates are all impermanent and changing in their nature, so that our present enemies present might have been very kind to us in the past.

As the Master 'Jigs med gLing pa said:

'Even if enemies create problems or conflicts, they are fundamentally a means for developing virtuous practice; they help us to eliminate attachments; thus they are like a Master for us, and as such they are to be thanked'.

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One trains one's mind in this way until our feeling towards that specific individual becomes neutral.

Among those towards whom we are neutral too, there is not one who has not been our mother or our father, our friend or our enemy.

Understanding this point well, one trains and purifies one's attitude of mind which then through this training becomes neutral to attachment and aversion. One meditates and one trains until a total impartiality arises in one's mind. Generally speaking a person who does not feel attachment and aversion, that is to say who does not feel considerations of friendship or enmity towards others, is said to live in a neutral state of ignorance, a state (of indifference) which neither brings benefits or disturbances.

This impartiality is not the same as Immeasurable Impartiality. Immeasurable Impartiality must be like the attitude of a Rishi who makes an offering.

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When a Rishi makes an offering to the public, whether it is a matter of a good person (to whom the offering is made) or not, it is said that the offering is still nevertheless made at the same level.

In the same way the beings who fill all the dimensions of space should become the object of great compassion and of impartiality (for us), without any consideration of greater or lesser closeness, without limits of attachment or aversion".

Immeasurable Compassion.

"Training oneself in total impartiality, there arises a great compassion for all beings that does not distinguish between them, and one will only be happy when all others are happy. For example, even if a child is in conflict with its parents they nevertheless overcome all difficulties until their child is well and happy; they are willing to sacrifice everything for this.

In the same way, one should make an effort to act for the benefit and the happiness of all beings, both directly and indirectly.

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All beings want to be happy and do not wish to suffer; but they do not understand the cause of suffering, and so this cause produces effects that are the opposite of happiness. Thinking that one will only be happy oneself when all other beings are happy in accordance with their various desires, one trains one's mind feeling joy for the happiness of others, and enjoying things as if one were in the place of others (usually when someone enjoys something and is happy we are jealous; contrarily to this one trains in feeling the happiness of that same person)".

The *Sutras* say:

'Train in compassion with compassionate actions of body, voice and mind, without disturbing other beings'.

The *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* affirms

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'Look at sentient beings with the eyes of kindness, thinking that they will all realize Enlightenment. Look at them with a smile, in a kind way, not fiercely or with hatred.

Do not scorn or offend others with your voice, and avoid the four non-virtuous actions⁴⁸ as much as possible.

Try in your own mind to benefit others as much as possible, avoiding feeling hatred or negative thoughts.

Do not try to display how good you are, or seek a superficial positive confirmation, but train with a determined mind and with your heart in the intention to benefit others.

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In this way one applies one's thoughts and actions praying that for one's whole life one will not disturb other beings in any way and that one will not create for them even the slightest small problem; and that we ourselves will be able to bring about their benefit and their provisional and definitive happiness. In practice, one will not cause any being with whom one has a relationship to suffer, from the little dog at the door, to one's aged parents. With one's body, voice and mind one will show an infinite compassion, just like a mother bird who cares for her young preparing first a comfortable and smooth nest, then covering them with her wings and comforting them with the heat of her body, until they are able to fly; one should act in this way.

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One trains and meditates on the great universal compassion, trying to create the benefit of all the beings of the three worlds right up to their realization".

Immeasurable Mercy.

"Immeasurable mercy is the intention to cause all beings to overcome pain and suffering.

Imagining oneself to be in the position of a guilty person unable to escape, who is suffering a great deal due to legal penalties, or imagining oneself in the position of animals who suffer because they are about to be butchered and are close to death, one asks oneself what one can do.

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Is there some place where one can escape to, or hide, to find safety?

There is no such possibility: one can lose one's life in an instant and in an instant separate oneself from the vision of this life and from attachment to this body, which one leaves to go to another existence. One trains in this way, taking suffering on oneself, until one feels a sensation of fear. One can further

imagine that the being in question is our own present mother who is suffering without being guilty in any way. One thinks of the pain that she feels and of what one can do to help her overcome this suffering. When the sensation of mercy really arises, one relaxes in this presence, beyond concepts.

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Thinking of those who are now our enemies, friends or neutral persons, we recognize that in the three times they have all without exception been our parents.

In space filled with the beings of the three worlds, some suffer in the lower three realms as a result of their bad deeds, like guilty persons in a prison; others only create causes of suffering, and for this last type of being, other beings are only animals to slaughter; both (these types of being) suffer because of the cause and effect of suffering; remembering their sufferings one feels compassion, and one trains, invoking them in this way:

'How happy I shall be if I should succeed on my own to carry each of these beings to the realization of Enlightenment, to free them from pain, from suffering, from their karmic vision! I pray to the Master and the Three Jewels that I should be able to succeed in doing this'.

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One should gradually train in the application of these principles, using the most effective methods; they must not remain just an intellectual knowledge. We generally do not notice the fact that the animals that are dependent on us suffer; even if we say 'poor things' about them, in truth we do not have any compassion and we are capable of torturing them, killing them to eat them, and of using them for ceremonies: this is a demonstration of a total absence of compassion. Such an attitude is contrary to the *Sutras* and the *Tantras*.

The *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal Lung* (which contains the instructions of the Master dPal sprul Rinpoche) explains these principles:

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'Whoever finds themselves at the level of the *Mahayana* and has the capacity to help others is excluded; all others show lack of compassion' (which means that if one offers a *Ganapuja* understanding its meaning, instead of eating with attachment one can create benefit). When the View and the Conduct are applied together, one is able to link them to the moment and to circumstances, and the condition and the attitude of the individual do not contradict the path of the Teaching but correspond to it perfectly.

This is indispensable for a practitioner of a higher level such as *rDzogs chen*.

At this point the practitioner always takes a humble position, dresses simply, respects all persons whether they are good or bad, trying as much as possible to help them and to benefit others in a direct and indirect way; thus mercy and compassion arise in the condition of the practitioner in a precise way. And even if one cannot carry out other positive actions, this is sufficient.

In the *Chos yang dag par sdud pa Sutra*⁴⁹ one can read:

'Whoever desires to realize themselves should not necessarily learn many things, except one thing,

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great compassion. Whoever has great compassion holds in the palm of their hand the *dharmas* of all Enlightened beings'.

With regard to the way one should meditate on compassion, one reads:

'One feels like a mother without any hands who sees the river taking away her son (if a mother without hands sees the river take away her son, she suffers incredibly, cries, runs desperately, but has no possibility to save him). In the same way, seeing the river of suffering take away the beings of the three worlds making them drown in the ocean of transmigration, a very great compassion arises. But even though this suffering exists, one has no capacity to help, so one makes an invocation from the bottom of one's heart praying

that one's own capacity to liberate all beings from the ocean of suffering may be empowered, and

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that this capacity may immediately be obtained'.

In this way one invokes the Master and the Three Jewels and one practises considering oneself and others to be an illusion, a dream, a mirage. At the end of the training one relaxes in the state beyond all concepts".

The Immeasurable Intention of Joy.

"The immeasurable intention of Joy is linked to not feeling jealousy or competitiveness towards others.

One should imagine a family that has riches, power and noble ancestors; instead of feeling jealous because of this, one should hope that the persons of that family may without disturbance enjoy even greater glory, riches, and intelligence,

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and that like them all beings may possess happiness and favourable conditions. One trains the mind in feeling happiness in the wish that all beings may enjoy these same opportunities. It is easier to carry this practice out at first in relation to one's relatives, friends, and those who live in the same place; then one should also try to extend the practice to include others, and finally also to include one's enemies, who are usually the object of our jealousy. Based on how well one succeeds in this mental training, one gradually applies this intention in daily life. To sum up, whoever feels jealousy or competitiveness and cannot tolerate the riches and the prosperity of others, should train themselves to completely uproot these bad ideas from their mind.

The essence of the practice of the *Bodhisattva* is that of bringing about the benefit in both cause and effect, and the provisional and definitive happiness, of all beings. Nothing is worse than to regret the happiness or the qualities of others.

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For this reason one should meditate trying to be deeply happy about them. Furthermore one should hope that others may enjoy even greater prosperity and perfection than they presently do; and one should rejoice thinking how happy we will be when that comes about. One should meditate in this way, with all one's heart. At the end one relaxes in the state beyond all concepts.

It is said that the way to train oneself in the Immeasurable Intention of Joy should be like a camel that loses its child and then finds it again. The camel is an animal that is more attached than others to its own offspring; if it should lose it, it feels a suffering more intense than others do; and finding it once again, it would in the same way be more happy. One has to train oneself like that.

The training in the Four Immeasurable Intentions becomes the cause for making the absolute *Bodhicitta* arise, which is in turn the cause, the seed, of the manifestation of the four dimensions (*Dharmakaya*, *Sambhogakaya*, *Nirmanakaya*, and *Svabhavakaya* or *Ngobo nyid*).

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This being an important cause, one should meditate trying to make this intention arise with all one's strength.

As the Master 'Jigs med gling pa said:

'If one has a good intention, the path and the realization are good; if one has a bad intention, the path and the realization are bad. Since all depends on our intention, one must train as much as possible to cultivate good intentions'. The benefits and the virtues which derive from this (are as follows): in this life one is protected by the divinities who control all that is positive; one receives empowerments from all the Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas*, and one realizes all one's desires; whatever activity (one undertakes) can become virtuous; there

will not be suffering at the moment of death and in the future one will enjoy the happiness of gods and men. At the end one will totally realize the state of the Buddha. It is therefore important to train oneself in having good intentions".

One can also train in this using the following words:

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"May all beings be happy and have the causes of happiness.
May all beings be free of suffering and the causes of suffering.
May all sentient beings never be separated from the supreme happiness which is beyond suffering.
May all sentient beings find themselves in the immeasurable equanimity that is beyond aversion, attachment, and beyond concepts of closeness and distance".

One should make this invocation repeatedly, trying to integrate its meaning into one's mind.

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The training in the cultivation of the *Bodhicitta* of application: the practice of the six *Paramitas*

The training in the *Bodhicitta* of application (*Jug pa*) consists of: generosity, morality, patience, diligence, and *Dhyana* or contemplation. These are aspects linked principally to method, and they are called the 'Five *Paramitas*'. The accumulation of wisdom, called *Prajna*, is linked to the sixth *Paramita*. One should train in these and learn gradually, trying to integrate their meaning into one's own condition.

The *Paramita* of generosity

The way of training oneself in the *Paramita* of generosity is expressed thus in *The Clear Light of the Path of Liberation*:

"The training in the *Paramita* of generosity is three-fold:
the gift of material things, the gift of the teaching, and the gift of the salvation from fear.

The gift of material things includes: offering a gift, offering a great gift, and offering the supreme gift.

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- Offering a gift: this means offering as much as possible according to one's own capacities, even if it is only a matter of offering a mouthful of food, without having any self-interest or expecting anything in return. One thus offers material things without attachment or avarice.

- As regards **the great gift**, one considers the example of 'Jig rten dBang Phyug (Loketsvara) who made a gift of all the riches contained in the treasures of his father, and even his own son.

- An example of someone who offers **the supreme gift** is the king Byams pai sTobs, who offered his own body to the five *Yaksha* brothers (*Yakshas* are a class of beings).

This type of supreme gift can only be offered by those who possess certain realizations and powers of a *Bodhisattva*, while those who are still on the path cannot do so in the right manner.

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What one can apply, however, is the *Lus sByin*, or the gift of the Body, as in the practice of *gCod*. In the present one should train oneself in becoming accustomed to the intention of giving; for the future one prays to be able to offer gifts as a *Bodhisattva* does.

Particularly when one finds oneself in a place of retreat, even if one lives in a very simple way, the offerings one makes should not be miserable ones. Through the power of *mantra* and visualization, even if one offers only a drop of water and a grain of barley, one can benefit as many *pretas* as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges.

In the same way one can apply the gift of water⁵⁰ or the offering of white and red *gSur*⁵¹ (*gSur* is a type of food which can be differentiated as either white *gSur* or red *gSur*; white *gSur* can be toasted barley flour mixed with butter and sweet substances; red *gSur* can be made of meat; the offering is burnt on a fire and authenticated with *mantra*; and in this way one can benefit beings that feed off the smell). With the rite of *gSur* one can benefit beings such as the *pretas* that live in space.

Furthermore there are numerous non-human beings that feed on life and steal the breath; with the aroma of the *gSur*, even these are provisionally satisfied and through the gift of the Teaching they are liberated into their own condition. In this way one can save the lives of many beings.

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When one offers this type of gift one begins with Refuge and the commitment to the *Bodhicitta* and one concludes the practice by dedicating the merits. This practice is easy to carry out and brings great benefit.

The Gift of the Teaching is that of giving others initiations, transmissions of the Teaching, and explanations. But if an individual has not overcome his personal self-interest and proceeds only according to his own desire, he can benefit others with the gift of the Teaching only in appearance. The power of this is merely like that of pouring liquid from one vase into another: when one is filled the other remains empty. It is as if a person in a dark place should take a lamp and push it out (away from themselves); while everything else is lit up, the person themselves remains in darkness. In this way one only accumulates obstacles and negativity.

Those who instead have attained specific realizations, or whose Master has requested them to do so,

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must certainly act for the benefit of others. These individuals are like the very substance of a good vase; even if they mature others, they remain the same themselves, because nothing is emptied or filled. The principle of the Teaching is like the fundamental quality of a lamp that, even if it illuminates others, never remains in the dark itself.

For this reason, those who enter into the practice, governing it with the Three Sacred Principles (the Refuge, the understanding of the unreal nature of all phenomena, and the dedication of merit), at the beginning make offerings of water, and of the body, such as the *Lus sByin* of the *gCod*; afterwards they offer the gift of the Teaching using words of the Buddha such as '*sDig pa ci yang mi bya shing*' etc.⁵² (don't create any hindrance); lastly they pray to reach the level of being able to act in that way in the future, and they train with this intention.

The gift of the salvation from fear is offered seeking both directly and indirectly to help and benefit beings who do not have the possibility of salvation and whose lives are in danger".

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With these explanations the meaning of the three types of offering in which it is necessary to train oneself has been clarified.

As far as **the method of making the practice of generosity concrete** is concerned, the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* states:

"If one trains the mind with the intention of offering to others all that one possesses, including the result itself of this offering, one can perfect the *Paramita* of generosity (offering)".

The Commentary to the text called *The Drop of Nectar*, explains the meaning of this sentence:

"One should offer one's riches, one's body, and all that one possesses, without hoping for a result or for anything in return. One should make this offering to anyone, rich or poor, important or less important. In this way one unbinds oneself from greed and from attachment. Training oneself and getting oneself used to the idea of giving one realizes the *Paramita* of generosity (offering). 158

In the *Blo gros mi zad pa Sutra*⁵³, (the questions of Blo gros mi zad pa), one reads: 'What is the *Paramita* of generosity? It is the giving away of all that one possesses, including the result (of the action of giving); it involves training oneself in the idea of giving' (What is meant by 'including the result'? If a person offers something but at the same time intends to keep (for themselves) the positive result of their own action, this means that they still feel a personal self-interest. 'Including the result' therefore means giving up this idea too).

Paramita, which means something beyond, implies not imputing any definitive reality to the three aspects of offering (that is to say, considering that the one who offers, the one to whom the offering is made, and the offering itself are unreal like a mirage or an illusion).

One also applies this principle in the practice of the *Paramita*.

For this reason the value of the gift does not depend on its size, but on the intention of the person (who gives it), who must be free of attachment for material things both externally and internally. The idea of giving, which one puts into practice through the training, is the offering itself. Therefore the idea of giving comes from our mind".

One should think of what the consequences may be if one's body, possessions and all the virtues one has accumulated in the three times are not offered or dedicated to others; of what the benefits that derive from offering them would be if they were offered; and of why one should thus offer to others. In this way one develops the intention to give and trains the mind. 159

The training in the *Paramita* of morality.

The text *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"The *Paramita* of morality has three aspects: refraining from harmful actions and habits through moral behaviour; accumulating virtuous *dharmas*; and acting for the benefit of others.

To control harmful actions and habits through morality or a vow, one should think of and remember the consequences of breaking a vow. With all the actions of one's body, voice and mind, one should try to eliminate and give up all that is negative in relation to the Path, as if it were poison.

The accumulation of virtuous dharmas involves trying to develop in one's own condition all that is positive and all the roots of virtue, even the smallest, either through a vow or through training. 160

One gradually, with awareness and the attention of presence tries to apply all the virtuous actions.

Lastly, in order **to act for the benefit** (of others) without harbouring any personal self-interest, one should apply the four virtuous accumulations (*bsDu ba'i dNgos po*): offering gifts, speaking kindly, acting in a correct way, and acting according to the circumstances in such a way that one can really benefit others.

Even if it is not easy for a beginner to apply all this, one can succeed by following the three sacred principles".

With regard to **The Four Virtuous Accumulations**, the *Shes Bya kun Khyab* states:

"The first is the unification of all the virtuous *dharmas* (*dGe ba chos sdud*). When a practitioner has matured his own condition in the Teaching, to benefit others he should apply the four virtuous accumulations, which are:

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offering, speaking kindly, applying oneself in the right way, and acting according to the circumstances.

- Offering means opening the door to those who have not yet begun in the Teaching, satisfying them at the beginning also with material things.

- When a person enters into the Path, one brings them to knowledge in a pleasant way, satisfying them and making them happy in order to persuade them to practise.

- Furthermore, just as when one wants to satisfy children and gives them good food, speaking sometimes kindly and sometimes a little firmly, so too with the Teaching, if one is not capable of maturing certain persons, one brings them to knowledge according to their needs or to the level of their desire; this is the third virtuous accumulation. To carry these beings into the knowledge of the Teaching and to bring it about that they apply a virtuous mode of conduct and manner, the person who is teaching enters into this same dimension, transmitting to them through his own attitude.

This is the fourth of the virtuous accumulations".

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In what way can one apply and follow these four aspects of morality in practice ?

The *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* states:

"Those who desire to follow these trainings in morality must observe their own minds with great presence. If one does not observe one's own mind, one cannot train in morality. Basing oneself on the presence of awareness, one should give up disturbing others, putting oneself at their disposition in order to benefit them. One must train oneself in this method of morality and follow it.

With regard to how one should follow and check one's morality, it is fundamental that one must remember that which one can and cannot do while (at the same time) still maintaining the continuation of presence in the three dimensions of the body, the voice, and the mind; through this remembering one does not forget what one can and cannot do; and through continuously remembering to maintain presence one examines and observes one's own body, voice, and mind according to the circumstances.

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Staying present one remembers the benefit of virtuous actions, which are to be followed, and the consequences of negative actions, which should be given up. One applies this in one's daily practice". (This does not necessarily mean obeying all the rules of the Law, but principally that one maintains presence and remembering in observing oneself. In this way one is aware of the positive or negative actions that one might carry out and of their consequences).

The training in the *Paramita* of Patience.

The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation states:

"The third *Paramita* has three principal aspects: the **patience of enduring** those persons who repay one in a contrary way (with **bad returned to you in exchange for the good you have done to them**); the patience of sacrificing oneself for the teachings; and the patience of enduring with courage the deep meaning of the Teaching".

With regard to the first aspect, one must endure those who steal, insult, or speak badly of one behind one's back. In the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* one reads:

"All the accumulations of merit of a thousand *kalpas*, such as generosity, offerings to the *Tathagatas* and good actions, can be destroyed in a single moment of anger".

Anger has very heavy consequences. Understanding this principle one must try to be present and to train oneself recognizing the consequences of anger.

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As beginners, we are like a little snake which easily becomes agitated, and it is not easy for us to put up with things patiently; for this reason we must try to apply ourselves in the practice.

First of all we train in the practice of not becoming angry, of not becoming agitated.

Once again in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* one reads:

"There is no hindrance worse than anger;
there does not exist a discipline (lit: sacrifice) better than patience".

One has to try to be patient and to train oneself in patience in various ways.

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In the series of *Mahayana Sutras* it is explained that anger is one hundred times worse than all the other hindrances including attachment.

The angry action of a single instant is like dry wood which in one single blaze can destroy the virtues accumulated in many lifetimes.

Patience on the other hand is like an ornament, it is one of the best qualities, both in the provisional and in the definitive sense.

Distinguishing that which brings benefit from that which on the other hand one should avoid, one also understands that it is indispensable to apply the practice committing oneself deeply.

The practice must always be governed with awareness.

The Patience of sacrificing oneself for the Teachings.

Letting the wind blow away all our attachments for this life,

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(that is to say, without attaching too much importance to things, letting go of them) one endures every type of difficulty, trying to study, to examine and to apply oneself with patience.

The Patience to endure the profound meaning of the Teachings.

The profound meaning of *Shunyata*, particularly in the *rDzogs chen* Teaching, goes beyond effort and action; as the *Twelve Vajra Laughs*⁵⁴ and *The Eight Great Words of Wonder*⁵⁵ explain, it is beyond cause and effect, virtuous and non-virtuous actions.

Bearing with courage the profound meaning of the Teaching means that if a person listens or enters into contact with this true deep meaning, even if he cannot grasp it, he does not develop a contrary view, but thinks instead of how happy he will be when he has finally understood it in a correct way; and even if he is not able to apply or practise it, he will show devotion and respect towards the profound meaning of the Teaching and towards those who teach it with their hearts.

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At the same time one should not assume an attitude or a way of thinking that are contrary, abandoning instead all such thoughts, and one should try to apply good intentions with the hope that in future one will be able to practice".

These are the principles of patience, the three principal aspects in which one should train.

Concerning **how one should practise patience**, the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* states:

"As far as the limits of space extend
one can find beings who seem wicked and unfriendly;
it is impossible to change all of them.
To conquer one's own mind when anger arises
is the only thing to do,
because thus it is as if all one's enemies were conquered".

This quotation explains the way in which one trains the mind. Understanding suffering is like sweeping away all hindrances; then one can bear and accept suffering recognizing it as an ornament of the mind, something that calls one back to virtue. There are therefore three principal ways of accepting suffering. Patience should be practised considering those who disturb us as objects of compassion, realizing that the origin of all these problems is to be found in ourselves, and

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understanding that all these are methods to dedicate the benefit. These are the three ways in which one applies patience. Furthermore, even though one recognizes that one does not live in a solid reality, that the nature of things is not concrete (since it is illusory), one trains in patience; understanding that one is not free but conditioned by every type of passion is also a training in patience; realizing that everything is pure from the beginning (*Ka dag*) one trains in patience. Each of these methods can be used for the practice.

The training in the *Paramita* of Diligence.

The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation affirms:

"The *Paramita* of diligence has three aspects; diligence like an armour (*go cha*); the diligence in application (*sbyor ba*); and the diligence that never considers itself sufficient (or does not easily become self-satisfied) (*chog par mi 'dzin pa*).

These three aspects are the basis of the training.

The armour of diligence: one tries to learn through studying the spiritual biographies of Masters, Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* of the past, their deeds and their sacrifices for the Teaching.

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Then, feeling joy, one encourages oneself, thinking:

"How is it possible that I can let myself go in this way allowing myself to be dominated by laziness?"; and even if one is not capable of acting like those Masters of the past, one tries in every possible way to emulate them. They are

emanations of the Buddhas and the *Bodhisattvas* who have endured many sacrifices for the Teaching; why therefore should we not do the same?

The Master Padmasambhava said:

'When one finds oneself in a situation in which everything is perfect and all the secondary causes in that moment are perfect, one should practice with great diligence to liberate oneself and to go beyond existence'. Now that the secondary causes permit me to follow the Teaching and to apply it, bringing to mind the example of the Masters of the past, I must succeed in applying the *Dharma* in with all my heart, even if there are urgent problems, accepting every difficulty and renouncing every comfort, offering my body and my life to all, consuming its flesh and blood'.

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Thinking in this way one takes the vow.

Diligence in application (*sbyor ba*).

When one decides to practise the *Dharma* one does not let oneself be carried away by laziness and indifference, postponing everything until tomorrow or the day after tomorrow; one does not abandon oneself even for a moment to laziness, just like a fearful person who suddenly finds themselves having to fight against a snake that clings to their knee, or else like a beautiful woman whose hair has caught fire; remembering impermanence, one enters into the practice of the *Dharma*.

The Diligence that never considers itself to be sufficient (thta does not easily become self-satisfied) (*chog par mi 'dzin pa*).

We should not be immediately satisfied when we succeed in applying virtuous actions in some small way, but we should rather think to ourselves that our virtuous actions are not yet sufficient; and not allowing ourselves to be conditioned by laziness or by negative actions we should decide to abandon meaningless actions that are conditioned by illusion.

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As the Omniscient One⁵⁶ said:

'Worldly action is only extinguished at the moment of death; if a person ceases acting, he will be exhausted in that same moment: this is the nature (of things)'.

Or again:

'All actions are like a children's game that never ceases; but if one stops playing there is also an end to it'.

One does not therefore abandon oneself to worldly visions, which are the source of distractions, one does not allow oneself to be conditioned by them, one avoids them, and instead of adding more wood to the fire with every day that passes, one tries to be diligent in relation to the Teaching and to always further develop one's practice.

The Master 'Jigs med gLing pa said:

'The closer one comes to death, the greater should become one's virtuous applications, one's courage, and one's diligence. This means that a practitioner should not be conditioned by secondary causes, like a harvest that is not conditioned or ruined by the frost'.

A practitioner trains in this way until total realization, until real Enlightenment. One should train even on the traces of past actions, and if one wants to try to reach the most important of qualities, the highest, one should not be satisfied right away or think that what has been attained is already sufficient. Once again it is said that one who is not diligent,

even if they possess intelligence (*Shes rab*), power and riches, will not succeed in saving themselves. Like the commander of a ship who has no oars for his boat, thus, in general, in every moment of every day, one should set limits for oneself with regard to eating and sleeping, and the presence of the state of *Rig pa* to which we entrust ourselves permits us to be neither too relaxed nor too agitated. One applies diligence like someone who knows how to shoot with a bow; but if one does not possess this (quality), and applies oneself in the practice only in moments of free time, it is not possible to arrive at the final goal".

These are the three ways in which one should apply diligence.

The way of carrying the *Paramita* of diligence into practice is expressed in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* as follows:

"Since the human body is like a boat that carries one over the river of suffering, and since it is not easy to find such a boat in the future, one should not allow oneself to fall into the sleep of ignorance".

This is the way to train the mind.

1) With the whip of impermanence one rouses oneself from the laziness which hinders one's application; 2) thinking of the pleasure of the *Dharma*, of the sacred Teaching, one renounces the laziness brought about by attachment to actions that are negative or without meaning. 3) Encouraged by this our mind will reject the laziness which hinders us from practising. These are the three ways of renouncing (*spong ba*) laziness.

The six capacities (*sTobs*)

Recognizing the benefits of virtue and the consequences of virtuous actions, one should develop the desire to practise and follow the *Dharma*.

The stable capacity involves the carrying to completion of the virtuous actions with great courage and commitment.

The second capacity is to rejoice in the application of practice without interest in a result, without thinking of oneself, or of what one is practising, or of the fact that one is carrying out a supreme good and virtuous action.

With the third capacity one avoids interruptions and negativities: when it is necessary should obstacles present themselves, if one encounters difficulties or if capacities are lacking, one is able to leave space and take up the practice again later.

The capacity of awareness and presence enables one to avoid through the force of one's will all actions linked to the passions and the emotions.

The capacity of presence permits one to govern one's own condition of body, voice and mind in the application of study and practice.

There are therefore three ways of renouncing, and six capacities to recognize and in which one must train oneself.

The method for training in the *Paramita* of *Dhyana* (*bsam gtan*: meditation).

The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation states:

"The *Paramita* of *Dhyana* has two aspects: the first demonstrates how it is necessary to avoid everything that is contrary to *Dhyana*".

In the *rGya cher rol pa Sutra* one reads:

'Desire (or attachment) is considered reprehensible by all the *'Phags pa*. I will therefore throw it away.'

The *bshes spring* states⁵⁷:

'Desires are the cause of great confusion and disturbances.

For the Buddha they are like the fruit of the kimpa⁵⁸ (kimpa is a fruit with poisonous seeds)'. 175

It is in the very nature of all compounded things (aggregates) that we will become separated from them (literally: all aggregates present the nature of separation).

Desire is the source of all problems; even if a person possesses many things, he is never satisfied and develops greed, struggling with enemies and thieves. Since this usually contradicts the *Dharma* it is considered reprehensible by all the *'Phags pa*. ('*Phags pa* means the *Bodhisattvas* or those who have certain realizations).

Friends who are ordinary people (Tibetan: *byis pa*, children: this term is used to indicate that ordinary people are like children in that they are ignorant of the real condition) are essentially bad; even if they try to do something good they get the opposite result and unleash a great deal of jealousy; they are never satisfied, they lead one into distraction and cause one's virtue to diminish, always causing one to hurry; even the many efforts they make in fact have no meaning; even if they manage to conquer some enemies, enemies are infinite in number; even if they succeed in helping and doing good for their friends and relations, there is never any end to it; so one should abandon the distraction which derives from attachment to place and friendships. A silent place like a forest is where one can reach a condition of peace, as the Buddha and the *Bodhisattvas* did, 176

a place where there is no confusion and involvement with work, companions and ordinary people who lead one into distraction. It is pleasant to have wild animals and birds for companions; it is easy to find the food of ascetic discipline (literally: sacrifice) such as water and leaves, to develop *Dhyana* and to free oneself in one's own state from attachment to links, hatred, friends, relatives, and enemies, and to thus come to possess numerous qualities.

If a person goes in search of such a silent and tranquil place and applies the practice, his qualities will without doubt be infinite. As the *Zla ba sgron ma Sutra*⁵⁹ says of the qualities of such a silent place: someone who directs himself in the direction of such a place, even if he only completes seven paces in that direction, will accumulate a benefit that is far superior to that of a person who makes offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions as numerous as the sand of the river Ganges.

Therefore one relaxes one's body and voice in a silent place like the one described or in a meditation hut". 177

Thus is clarified how one should apply *Dhyana*.

Secondly, one can identify three principal aspects of the true basis of *Dhyana*:

The *Dhyana* applied in the ordinary way (*Byis pa nyer spyod kyi bsam gtan*); the *Dhyana* which distinguishes the meaning (*Don rab 'byed pa'i bsam gtan*); and the *Dhyana* of the virtuous *Tathagatas* (*De bshin gshegs dge'i bsam gtan*).

The *Dhyana* applied in an ordinary way is described in the *Kun bzang Bla ma'i zhal Lung* as follows:

"When a person meditates and feels attachment for the experiences of pleasure, clarity, or the absence of thoughts (*mt rtog pa*) and tries to have and stay in that type of experience, it is said that such a person is applying ordinary *Dhyana*.

When one overcomes attachment to experiences, but one is (still) attached to antidotes such as the concept of *Shunyata* (absolute voidness), even though one does not yet have a precise experience of *Dhyana*,
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this is called the *Dhyana* that distinguishes the meaning.
When one overcomes the concept of antidotes (such as *Shunyata*), and remains in the *Dharmata* state of *Dhyana* undisturbed by thoughts, this is called **the *Dhyana* of the virtuous *Tathagatas***.

When one practices *Dhyana*, in every moment of practice, one's body should be in the position of Vairocana that has seven qualifications⁶⁰: one's gaze should be level. If the body is seated in a straight manner, the channels will also be straight; and if the channels are straight, the *prana* (breathing) will be straight. If the *prana* is straight, the mind will also remain straight. One should not lie down, and one should not lean on anything, but should remain with one's back and the body straight. The mind should not think of anything in particular; one should remain without concepts and relax in this state.
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This is the essence of the *Paramita* of *Dhyana*."

One should practice in this way.
The *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* explains:

"Meditating and applying the principle of the equality of oneself and others, exchanging oneself with others and holding others more dear than oneself, are aspects of the training in the practice of *Dhyana*".

With regard to **meditating on the equality of oneself and others**, *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"Just as we ourselves do not desire suffering, but wish for happiness, so too do all beings; one needs to try to practice both directly and indirectly to benefit and make happy all beings until they all overcome suffering;
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thus one tries to uproot all one's bad intentions based on attachment and hatred, and one trains in feeling oneself to be equal to all others".

Furthermore in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* one can read:

"Others are equal to me. One should apply this principle from the beginning, meditating on the fact that happiness and suffering are always the same for all; therefore one tries to protect others as if one was acting for oneself".

This quotation describes the way in which one can train the mind. With regard to the benefit of this training the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* states:

"If a person trains in this way and becomes used to this method, feeling delight in calming the suffering of other beings, carrying out actions that bring benefit, like a duck that enters into a lake in which lotus flowers are sprouting, such a person is capable, if necessary, of entering into the dimension of hell in this manner".
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Applying what has been described above one can obtain this benefit.

With regard to **the way of exchanging oneself with others**, *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"Exchanging oneself with others is a training in *Bodhicitta*. When, in reality, or in one's imagination, one sees a being who is suffering, as one exhales one should concentrate on one's own happiness and the good things related to one's own physical body, such as riches, and also on all the roots of the virtues, and pushing them out as if taking off one's clothes, one should offer them to that suffering being; then as one inhales, one should voluntarily accept to take all that person's suffering on oneself. One trains like this with one's mind, and, through this cause, one concentrates on the fact that that being will be happy and overcome all his suffering. With this intention one gives up benefit for oneself, accepting one's own suffering; one begins by having this intention towards a single being, and then extends it to many. To train the mind one should pronounce the following words:

"I offer all the virtues I have accumulated to all beings.
May the whole sky be filled with benefits and happiness.

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I will take on and carry on my shoulders
the suffering of (other) beings.
Thus I will dry up the ocean of suffering".

These words contain power. (It is called 'power', because these words have been used by many Masters, particularly in practices such as the *gCod*). Remaining calm and tranquil in awareness and presence - that is to say, without being indifferent or pretending not to see - one notices all sufferings, great and small, and one trains in taking them on oneself. But if it should come about that one is minimally afflicted with an illness or some suffering and becomes frightened, and thinking that one will obtain the benefit of healing pretends to train one's mind, this is nothing other than a further confirmation of the ego, a further attachment to the ego, a training of the mind in which the aim is contrary to the real meaning (of the practice), and it will not bring any benefit. If the Masters have explained something in a given way, it is generally necessary to apply it (in that way). Thus, when we are struck by suffering or an illness, we should think:

"Many, many beings are suffering like me. May all

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their suffering mature in me,
so that they shall be free of it and can enjoy happiness".

One should make this invocation and meditate in this way from the bottom of one's heart. We ourselves will enjoy the happiness and pleasure of doing so. And because of our happiness and our virtue, all beings will also be happy. Thus one should meditate. This method for cultivating the *Bodhicitta* substituting oneself for others is an essential meditation which must be applied by all those who enter into the path of the *Mahayana*. Cultivating this *Bodhicitta* sincerely, even only once, one is enabled to purify obstacles and hindrances accumulated for many *kalpas* and one can perfect a vast accumulation of wisdom and merits.

And even if many there are many causes which could mature into the vision of births in the lower states or in those in which there is no possibility of realization, one liberates oneself from these".

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The *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* further states:

"Considering oneself to be full of defects and others to be gifted with an ocean of qualities, one gives up attachment to the ego and takes the place of others meditating in this way".

This is the general outline of the method of practising the exchanging of oneself with others.

More specifically, the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* states:

"One trains in putting oneself in the position of others without rationalizing about it. If one observes the sensation of jealousy, of comparison and pride, one meditates on this".

Putting oneself in the place of another person who is in a lower position than oneself, one should observe (how) jealousy (arises); putting oneself in the position of someone who is at the same level, one should observe (how) comparison (arises); putting oneself in the place of someone more important than oneself, one should discover (how) pride (arises), and so on. One should train in this way.

With regards to **holding others more dear than oneself**, *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* contains the following invocation:

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"If, remaining in Samsara or taking rebirth in the lower states,
I should be struck by any kind of undesired disaster,
I will bear it, maturing on myself the suffering of other beings. May all my
virtues and my happiness
be perfected for the sake of all beings.
One should train in this way from the bottom of one's heart and at the end,
one should relax in a state beyond concepts. One should understand
furthermore that we ourselves and all others are an illusion, an unreal dream".

To sum up, the essence of **the practice of Dhyana** is expressed as follows in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*:

"All the happiness existing in the world
arises from the desire that others should be happy;
all the suffering that exists in the world
arises from the desire for one's own happiness".

Training one's mind in this principle, one remains in the true sense of *Dhyana*.

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The Paramita of wisdom (Prajna)

With regard to the way in which one trains in the *Paramita* of wisdom (*Prajna*), *The Clear Light of the Path to Liberation* states:

"There are three principal trainings with regard to the *Prajnaparamita*:
listening, reflecting, and meditating.

The wisdom which derives from listening

The practitioner listens to the words of the Master and tries to understand the meaning of that which is explained;

The wisdom which derives from reflecting

once one has understood the meaning, one should examine what one has heard in a profound way, and compare it with one's own condition, thus stabilizing one's knowledge. When one practises in this way, it is not necessary to ask for confirmation from someone else because one has understood the meaning well oneself, and thus one has become independent. One should examine and study thoroughly in this way, when there is the possibility.

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The *Prajna* of meditation.

After having understood all this one applies it in practice, and through maturing (in this) one finally realizes the knowledge of the real meaning. It is first therefore necessary to study, to listen, and to examine and afterwards to carry the meaning into the level of practice; thus one understands that all the five objects of the senses⁶¹ appear even though they do not have any concrete nature, that they are like an illusory vision, like the effect of a cause, a provisional condition that manifests like an illusion, a mirage (*mitg yor* means something that from afar seems to be like a person, but in reality is not). Even if everything (that arises) both internally and externally has no real concrete existence, it nevertheless appears like an illusion, like an echo; and it manifests even though nothing solid exists as a basis for it, and no-self exists based on it; it is like a city of the *Dri za* (a class of beings who do not have a physical body. *Dri* means smell, *za* means food; the *Dri za* are beings who feed off smells). Even if one perceives this vision, it has no concrete substance, it is like a reflection that appears like a magic city in the dimension of the unreal.

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Observing all visions one realizes that they are false and unreal. Observing too the nature of the thinking subject who does not block (anything) but perceives this (illusory) vision, one discovers the emptiness of the one who thinks. The nature of the *Dharmata* is like the sky, empty and clear. *Prajnaparamita* means relaxing in this state of knowledge".

One therefore trains in these three aspects of the *Prajnaparamita* experiencing them concretely in one's own condition.

The training in the two 'absences of self-nature' (or 'non-egos') (this is characteristic of the *Sutras* and originally comes from the *Hinayana*).

The *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* states:

"There are two truths,
the one relative, and the other absolute.
The absolute truth is not an object of the mind, of thought. The mind is relative".

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One has to bring the meaning of this explanation into practice. To do this, the absence of an independent self-nature of the individual and the absence of an independent self-nature of the *dharmas*, or phenomena, must be realized in one's own condition.

The absence of an independent self-nature of the individual concerns persons who are ignorant (that is to say, those who do not understand the real meaning of the condition (of existence), who carry out actions and experience their fruits; and the I, the individual, the sentient being, whose basis is defined as body, voice and mind.

Are these the same thing, or are they separate? Are they material? Do they have consciousness, or not? Are they permanent or impermanent?

If one examines in this way, one notices and discovers that everything is defined or conceived of by the illusory mind, which calls the non-existent self 'I', and non-existent others 'others'. Yet there does not concretely exist anything at all in the real condition of things that can be defined as 'I' or sentient beings.

To apply **the absence of an independent self-nature of phenomena or dharmas** one applies **the four relaxations in remembering** (or *Dran pa nye bar bzag pa*; *dran pa* means remembering; *nye pa bzag pa* means to relax): the relaxation in remembering of the body, the relaxation in remembering of sensation,

the relaxation in remembering of the mind, and the relaxation in remembering of phenomena.

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Through these four relaxations in remembering one must realize the (state of knowledge).

The relaxation in remembering of the body.

With regard to the practice of the gradual training, the commentary to the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* written by dPal sprul Rinpoche states:

"(The whole of) Existence, the universe, Samsara and Nirvana, and all phenomena appear through the mind, all is defined and recognized by the mind; in any event, beyond the mind nothing exists; since the mind is conditioned and dominated by the body, one must first of all examine the body.

Are the body and the individual limbs that form it the same thing or not? Where does that which is known as the body come from? Where is it now? Where does it disappear to? Examining in this way one discovers that the body is without any self-existent nature, and one relaxes in this discovery and in the meaning of this discovery. When attachment to one's own body or that of others arises, one meditates imagining one's body as an impure and unreal thing, like an illusion, and

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thus one overcomes the vision of attachment to the body".

The relaxation in remembering of sensation

"Sensation, of pleasure and of suffering, is 'he root of the passions, of attachment, of accepting and rejecting. Are these an aspect of the mind or are they something else? Examining in this way, one discovers that all sensations and suffering do not have an inherent self-nature or a concrete meaning, and one meditates on this discovery, training in this way".

The relaxation in remembering of the mind.

"The (six) sense consciousnesses, the continuation of consciousness that appears as before and after, as (now) good and (now) bad, are they the same thing (as the mind) or not? All that manifests in the mind as pleasure and suffering, believing and not believing, desire and rejection, the *dharmas* and the non-*dharmas*, happiness and misery, attachment and aversion, are they the same thing or (many) different things?

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Examining in this way one discovers the nature of these manifestations. If they are (one) same thing, why does this (single thing) appear in so many different ways? Why does this (one single) mind have these different aspects of suffering, aversion, and attachment? If these things manifest as secondary causes according to circumstances, what then is the essence of a mind that is not conditioned by secondary causes? What is its nature? Does it exist or not? Is it permanent or impermanent? Examining repeatedly one discovers that the mind does not have a root, a basis, and one succeeds in establishing this knowledge".

The relaxation in remembering of phenomena.

"The body, sensations, the mind and all the *dharmas* which arise interdependently of cause and effect, action and non-action, are not real examining in this way

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one discovers *Shunyata*, which is beyond concepts; one recognizes that the relative condition has the nature of an illusion, a dream; through this knowledge one overcomes attachment and aversion; one trains one's behaviour totally giving up these feelings and maintaining the awareness that all is an illusion. In the absolute condition there does not exist a phenomena that is concrete, right down to an atom. If one realizes this understanding there cannot be attachment. Therefore practise in the way described".

(This explains the training in the relative and the absolute condition).

With the practice and the integration of this knowledge in one's own state one discovers the real meaning of that which in the Vehicle of the Cause is defined as the two 'absences of self-nature'.

Even if the six *Paramitas* described are characteristic of the *Sutras*, a practitioner of the Ati rDzogs pa chen po should not be ignorant of them; rather he should make use of them until the practice becomes more concrete.

Chapter Five

The Theoretical Views

The View of the Analytical Vehicle.

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In the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* one can read:

"The analytical vehicle is divided into three aspects: that of the Listeners (Sanskrit: *Sravaka*, Tibetan: *Nyan thos*), that of the Solitary Realizers (*Pratyekabuddhas*, *Rang Sangs rgyas*) and that of the *Bodhisattvas* (Tibetan: *Byang chub Sems dpa'*).

The Theoretical View of the *Sravakas*

The theoretical view of those who follow the vehicle of the *Sravakas* is as follows: (they consider that) both the theory which asserts the total non-existence of phenomena or nihilism, and the theory which on the other hand asserts the eternal quality of phenomena (eternalism), etc., as in the argument artfully conjectured by the *Mutegps* and the other extremist schools, are like mistaking a rope for a snake, and have no foundation whatsoever. That which (the *Sravakas*) consider real in an absolute sense is consciousness, together with the infinitesimal particles of the four large elements⁶² that make up the aggregates, the sense bases, the sources of perception, etc.

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Their practice consists in meditating on the Four Noble Truths, through which they gradually realize the four types of fruit.

The Theoretical View of the *Pratyekabuddhas*.

The theoretical view of those who follow the vehicle of the *Pratyekabuddhas* is in agreement with that of the *Sravakas* with regard to the negation of the argument that an eternal being exists as the basis of phenomena, as is artfully imagined by the *Mutegps* and the other extremist schools. Where they differ is rather in a partial understanding of the absence of an independent being in phenomena related to the aggregate of form. Furthermore, with regard to the way in which they reach their specific fruit of realization, in contrast to the *Sravakas* they succeed without following a master, arriving at an understanding of the profound meaning of the ultimate nature of phenomena through the twelve links of (the chain of) interdependent causation⁶³, and through the virtue of practice carried out in other lives.

The Theoretical View of the *Bodhisattvas*.

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The theoretical view of those who follow the vehicle of the *Bodhisattvas* is that, in an absolute sense, the totality of the phenomena of existence, whether of the sphere of the disturbing emotions or of the aspect of complete purity, lacks any self-existing nature. At the relative level, however, everything manifests distinctly with its own characteristics, in way similar to a magical illusion. Practising the ten perfections⁶⁴, they progress gradually as a result through the ten levels of realization (*bhumi*), right up to attaining supreme Enlightenment.

The Mantrayana

The Teaching of *Tantra* is rendered in Sanskrit as *Mantrayana*, which means the 'Vehicle of the *Mantra*', which corresponds to the Tibetan *Nag* (equivalent to the Sanskrit *mantra*) *kyi thegpa*.

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It is also known as the Diamond Vehicle, or *Vajrayana*, or the '*Vajra* vehicle', in Tibetan *rDo rje'i theg pa*. All the teachings attributed to Buddha Shakyamuni have been gathered together and subdivided into three sections of scriptures or *Tripitaka* (literally, Three Volumes, or Baskets), called: *Sutrapitaka*, (section of the *sutras*); *Vinayapitaka* (section of discipline); and *Abhidharmapitaka* (section of metaphysics and phenomenology). The teachings of the supreme and secret vehicle of the *Mantra* are generally considered to belong to the *Abhidharmapitaka*, but some Indian and Tibetan masters have proposed to include it in a further section: the *Vidyadharapitaka* or 'section of the knowledge holders' (Tibetan: *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i sda snod*), for which reason they consider there to be a four-fold subdivision of the canonical scriptures⁶⁵.

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What is the difference between *Sutra* and *Tantra*?

As far as the characteristics which distinguish the teachings of the *Tantras* from the *Sutras* are concerned, it is written in the *Lamp of the Three Methods* (*Tsbul gsum sgron me*)⁶⁶:

Not forgetting the single nature of realization,
there are many different methods that are not difficult
which are conferred expressly on persons
with sufficiently high capacity: for this reason the *Mantrayana* is a superior
method.

In the *Universal Knowledge* (*Shes bya kun khyab*) of Jamgon Kongtrul one reads:

There is no difference in the final arrival point. (But) the methods of entering into the Path, taking initiation, visualizing the divinity, reciting *mantra*, and the knowledge of the methods are different.
(Why is it said that one should not be ignorant of or not know the methods? Because the practice of the *Sutras* is based on the experience of Voidness, of the calm state, and is not able to integrate movement. In *Tantra* on the other hand, this capacity exists. Someone who is capable of integrating movement can reach realization more quickly. In the *Sutras* this method is not known).
In *Tantra* there are not one but many methods, many *Tantras*, according to the infinite variety of capacity of beings, their habits and their ways of doing things. In the *Mahayana* too there are many methods, but these are linked to making sacrifices, to asceticism, they are based on vows. It is therefore not easy to apply them and travel this Path without difficulty.

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In the system of the *Mantrayana* on the other hand, the methods are related to the habits of the practitioner.

Through pleasure one can reach supreme pleasure; for this reason there are no difficulties, and it is easy to follow the Path.

But, then, one might think, if it is so easy and there exist so many methods, why did the Buddha not transmit them to everyone?

The Buddha did not communicate the Teaching according to his understanding and knowledge; the Buddha taught according to the capacity of beings and their condition.

Tantra is a Teaching suited to persons who have a higher capacity of understanding. In general people who are suited to receiving the teachings of

the *Paramitas* have less capacity than persons who are suited to receiving the teachings of *Tantra*.

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With regard to **Inner and Outer Tantras** the *Shes bya kun khyab* states:

"The Master Sang rgyas gsang ba (Sanskrit: Buddhaghosha) maintains that the *Tantras* are divided into the *Kriya* and *Yoga* Series; all the *Tantras* which go from the *Dam tshig gsum bkod*⁶⁷ to the *rNam snang mngon byang*⁶⁸ are considered to belong to the *Kriyatantra*.

The *Tantras* which go from the *De nyid' dus pa*⁶⁹ to the *gSang ba 'dus pa* of the *Anuttaratantra* are considered to belong to the *Yogatantra*. These two series are called the Inner and Outer *Tantras*".

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The Three Series of *Tantras*.

The *Shes bya Kun khyab* states:

"As far as the triple division of the *Tantras* into *Kriya*, *Ubhaya* (literally 'of both' or neutral), and *Yoga* is concerned, Masters such as sGeg pa'i rDorje and Kun snyin (Taranatha) explain that both the teachings of the *Yogatantra* and those of the *Mahayoga* (or *Anuttarayogatantra*) are concerned principally with the practice of contemplation. For this reason they are considered as *Yogatantra* and are divided into three".

The fourfold subdivision of the *Tantras* is a more well known system: In the *Shes bya kun khyab* one reads:

"There are four types of disciples of the Buddha: 1) those who appreciate to a greater extent external practices such as purification and ablutions, who desire to practise the Teaching in this way; 2) those who are

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more interested in the real meaning and less in external actions; 3) those who understand that external actions can be a source of distraction, and therefore dedicate themselves principally to meditation on the real inner meaning; and 4), those who rejoice in enjoyments through the non-dual wisdom of method and *Prajna*.

When these four types of disciples receive a Teaching they become respectively followers of the 1) *Kriya*, 2) *Ubhaya*, 3) *Yoga*, and 4) *Anuttarayogatantra*.

To transmit the Teaching to the four types of disciples in accordance with their inclinations there have therefore been imparted teachings related to the four types of *Tantra*: to those who feel greater attachment and lust, and who in the Hindu tradition are followers of the methods linked to the god Shiva, the method of the *Anuttaratantra* was transmitted; to those who are conditioned by anger, who in the Hindu tradition are followers of the methods linked to Vishnu (*Khyab 'Jug*), the method of the *UbhayaYoga* was taught; to those more obscured by ignorance, who traditionally follow the methods linked to Brahma the *Kriyatantra* has been taught;

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to the individuals with undefined characteristics the *Yogatantra* was taught. These considerations are explained in the *De nyid' dus pa*, which contains the way of seeing of Masters such as Nagarjuna, Rab 'byor bskyans and others". And furthermore:

"The *Dur khrod smad du byung ba Tantra*⁷⁰ maintains that to discipline Brahmins, nobles, royalty, and common people with the Teaching, and to carry them onto the Path, the four series of *Tantras* were transmitted, namely the *Kriya*, *Ubhaya*, *Yoga* and *Anuttaratantra*.

The *rDorje gur Tantra*⁷¹ states:

"To those with inferior capacity the *Kriyatantra* was taught.

To those with a medium capacity the *Ubbayatantra* was taught.

To those with a superior capacity the *Yogatantra* was taught.

To those with a supreme capacity the *Anuttaratantra* was taught."

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There are, therefore, different ways of seeing. The *Kriyatantra*, the *Ubbayatantra*, and the *Yogatantra* are called the Lower *Tantras*. The *Anuttaratantra* is called the Higher *Tantra*.

The classification of *Tantras* into Higher and Lower *Tantras* is considered to be a more general system.

The meaning of the word *tantra* itself is expressed as follows in the *Shes bya kun kyab*:

"*Tantra* means the luminosity of the nature (of existence), Samantabhadra, primordial *Bodhicitta*, beyond beginning and ending, without interruption right up until total realization; for this reason it is also called 'continuation'.

There are three principal ways of understanding this:

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1) The *Tantras* of the cause or of the nature, which concern the cause of realization; 2) the *Tantras* of the method or of the base, which concern the secondary causes for realization; and 3) the *Tantras* of the fruit, which concern the benefit for oneself and others, realization".

Father, Mother, and Non-dual *Tantra*:

The text *Grub mtha' bsdus pa* of the *Yid bzhin mdzod* written by Ju Mipham states:

"As an antidote to the three poisons or passions and according to the different capacities (of individuals), there exist Father, Mother, and Non-Dual *Tantras*.

The methods characteristic of the Father *Tantras* are those of the *mayic* body, of the appearance of wisdom, those of the *prana* (vital energy), and those presented principally as wrathful actions.

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These methods are suited to those who feel a lot of anger and to those who are particularly bound to external factors.

The principal characteristics of the Mother *Tantras*, are an emphasis on the method of the perfectioning (stage) rather than on the development (stage), on *Prajna* and Emptiness, and the path to arrive at these linked to the *Yoga* of the Clear Light, the method which relates to the control of the *kundalini*⁷² energy through which one obtains the experience of bliss, and the action of power which derives from it.

This type of practice principally concerns working internally within the body, and is suited to persons of a medium capacity.

The teachings relating to the Non-dual *Tantras* contemplate the practice of Method and *Prajna* and the Development and Completion (or perfection) stages in the equanimity of the pure dimension, the total wisdom of the unique *thig le*, the primordial state that is the foundation of all the phenomena of existence.

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These teachings are suited to those persons who are dominated by ignorance, who have superior capacity and who desire to enter into a path 'beyond effort'".

According to some theories of the modern *Tantras* (that is to say, those developed in Tibet in the later period), the various systems of the higher *Tantras* or *Anuttaratantras* (all) regard the aspect of the union of Method and *Prajna* in the same way, but they are defined as being Mother or Father *Tantras* according to the greater or lesser prevalence of the two aspects of Method and *Prajna*. One can distinguish the origin of a *Tantra* or of a *mandala* (as belonging to either) the Father or Mother *Tantras* according to the manifestation of the central divinity (male or female), by the ornaments, the clothing, the way in which the *mantra* turns (clockwise or anti clockwise), by whether the action is carried out in the day or at night, by the way in which the pure dimension is presented and so on.

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Once again according to the tradition of the modern *Tantras*, one can classify the Inner *Tantras* as: Father *Tantras*, such as the *gSang ba 'dus pa* (*Gubyasamaja*)⁷³; Mother *Tantras*, such as the '*Khor lo bde mchog* (*Chakrasamvara*)⁷⁴; Non-Dual *Tantras* such as the *Dus kyi' khor lo* (*Kalachakra*)⁷⁵. In the *Kalachakra* the meaning of the fourth wisdom initiation is openly revealed, while it is not found in the other (systems); and since it does not fall into the limits of Method and Voidness, the *Kalachakra* is also called the 'level of the neutral realization of *Vajrasattva*'; because of its impartiality it is also said to be like opening the precious *za ma tog* of Enlightenment (the *za ma tog* is a type of vase that contains all the methods of practice), it is considered to be the apex of all the *Tantras* and is for this reason praised in the *Lung* (the explanations contained in the *Tantras*).

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What has been said above refers to a general method of illustrating the Teaching of the Victorious One.

The conclusive Teaching of the Buddha is expressed in **the classification into nine vehicles** of the ancient tradition of *Tantras* maintained by the *rNing ma pa* school, which goes back to the *Tantras* translated at the time of Guru Padmasambhava.

In the *Shes bya kun khyab* one reads:

"The first three Vehicles are those of the Listeners (*Nyan thos*), that of those who proclaim that they realize themselves by themselves (*Rang rgyal* or *Rang sangs rgyas*) and that of the *Bodhisattvas* (*Byang sems*), which are called the three series of the Characteristics, or rather of the *Sutras*.

Since karma and the passions are the cause of suffering, applying renunciation one reaches liberation. For this reason they are called Vehicles which lead to the knowledge of all the sources.

The *Kriya*, the *Ubhaya* which applies both methods (that is to say those of the *Kriya* and the *Yoga*)

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and the *Yoga* are known as the Outer *Tantras*.

These three Vehicles use methods such as purification through water and other types of ascetic practices, as do the Brahmins or the followers of the Vedas, and they are called the Vehicles of the Ascetics.

The explanations concerning these six vehicles are not different from those of the modern *Tantras*".

"The *Mahayoga*, the *Anuyoga* (*Lung*), and the *Atiyoga* (*Man ngag*) are concerned with the non-dual system of the two higher truths, of the visions of the external and internal world in which wisdom appears as the dimension of the nature of the mind.

In general, they are called Vehicles of Method which have the power to govern, since the related methods teach one to govern the non-dual state of all phenomena".

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Thus the six classes of *Tantra* have been briefly delineated. There now follows a detailed explanation relating to each of the three classes of the Inner and Outer *Tantras*, and of the way in which one must train correctly in the practice of contemplation taught by the Master Padmasambhava.

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The three vehicles of the Ascetic disciplines.

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"The *Vajrayana* is made up of three vehicles: *Kriya*, *Ubhaya*, and *Yogatantra*. According to the theoretical view of those who follow the vehicle of the *Kriya Tantras*, at the absolute level birth and cessation do not exist, but nevertheless at the relative level one meditates on the form of the divinities and one realizes oneself principally through the use of ritual items and primary and secondary factors such as the visualization of the image of the divinity and of the symbol of the state of mind, the recitation of the *mantra*, acts of purification, observation of the astrological calendar, of particular days (such as the day of the *Dakinis* or others linked with certain practices) and constellations, etc. Thus one obtains the final goal through cause and effect.

According to the View of those who follow the vehicle of the *Ubhaya Tantras*, birth and death do not exist at the absolute level, but at the relative level

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one meditates on the form (or dimension) of the divinity and at the same time applies the *De Nyid* or 'four conditions'⁷⁶ (literally 'that same condition'); one uses the support of ritual items, and primary and secondary causes, etc. And in this way, one attains realization.

The *Yogatantra* is divided into external, which is the Vehicle of the ascetic *Tantras*, and internal, which is the Vehicle of the *Tantras* of Method. In the ascetic *Tantras*, external objects of practice are not specified; and since at the absolute level neither birth nor death exist, with the contemplation of the pure dimension similar to that of the male and female divinities, one meditates on the dimension of higher form of the four *Mudras* (*Phyag rgya bzhi ldan pa*). This is considered to be the principal means with which one attains realization".

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These are the principal Views relating to the three series of *Tantras*; through the practice one attains realizations in relation to each of them.

The four Mudras.

Rongzom's Commentary to the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"The four *Mudras* are the symbol of the dimension of the total state of body, voice and mind and of their related actions.

The first is called the *Mudra* of *Samaya* (*Dam tshig gi phyag rgya*), since the *Samaya* is the secret wisdom of the state of the mind and the *mudra* is its symbol.

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This is how one explains the meaning of this term, which is a combined term made up of two words (*mudra* and *samaya*),

These teachings are suited to those persons who are dominated by ignorance, who have superior capacity and who desire to enter into a path 'beyond effort'".

According to some theories of the modern *Tantras* (that is to say, those developed in Tibet in the later period), the various systems of the higher *Tantras* or *Anuttaratantras* (all) regard the aspect of the union of Method and *Prajna* in the same way, but they are defined as being Mother or Father *Tantras* according to the greater or lesser prevalence of the two aspects of Method and *Prajna*. One can distinguish the origin of a *Tantra* or of a *mandala* (as belonging to either) the Father or Mother *Tantras* according to the manifestation of the central divinity (male or female), by the ornaments, the clothing, the way in which the *mantra* turns (clockwise or anti clockwise), by whether the action is carried out in the day or at night, by the way in which the pure dimension is presented and so on.

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"The first three Vehicles are those of the Listeners (*Nyan thos*), that of those who proclaim that they realize themselves by themselves (*Rang rgyal* or *Rang sangs rgyas*) and that of the *Bodhisattvas* (*Byang sems*), which are called the three series of the Characteristics, or rather of the *Sutras*.

Since karma and the passions are the cause of suffering, applying renunciation one reaches liberation. For this reason they are called Vehicles which lead to the knowledge of all the sources.

The *Kriya*, the *Ubhaya* which applies both methods (that is to say those of the *Kriya* and the *Yoga*)

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and the *Yoga* are known as the Outer *Tantras*.

These three Vehicles use methods such as purification through water and other types of ascetic practices, as do the Brahmins or the followers of the Vedas, and they are called the Vehicles of the Ascetics.

The explanations concerning these six vehicles are not different from those of the modern *Tantras*".

"The *Mahayoga*, the *Anuyoga* (*Lung*), and the *Atiyoga* (*Man ngag*) are concerned with the non-dual system of the two higher truths, of the visions of the external and internal world in which wisdom appears as the dimension of the nature of the mind.

The three *Inner Tantras* are strictly linked and those who practise the *rDzogs pa chen po* use them unifying their meaning.

For this reason it is necessary that practitioners who enter into the *rDzogs chen* Teaching understand clearly the meaning of the View (*lta ba*), the meditation (*sGom pa*), the attitude (*sPyod pa*) and the fruit (*'Bras bu*) of the three *Inner Tantras*.

In the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* one reads:

"There are three principal methods in the View of the three internal *Tantras*:
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the method of Development, the method of Completion and the method of the Great Perfection".

In the system found in the Ancient Tradition (*rNyting ma pa*), the Development stage is *Mahayoga*, the Completion stage is *Anuyoga*, and that of the Great Perfection is *Atiyoga*.

The names and qualities of the three series of inner *Yogas* can be explained on the basis of these three particular aspects of the *Tantras*.

In the modern system of *Tantras* on the other hand, the Development stage is called the Father *Tantra*; the Completion stage is called Mother *Tantra*; and that which includes both the Development and the Completion stage is called Neutral *Tantra*. According to the View of modern tradition of *Tantras* the application of the above mentioned methods is the same (that is to say, it differs from that of the *rNying ma pa*).

It is very important to understand clearly what the differences are between these approaches.

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In the tradition of the modern *Tantras* everything that is called *Anuttarat Tantra* or Higher *Tantra* corresponds with the *Mahayoga*, which is the path of gradual transformation. The final arrival point of the practice at the Completion stage is called the unique *Mahamudra*. The *Anuyoga* is the path of transformation, which is the method used by *Tantra*, yet its principle is that everything is perfected from the beginning: understanding that our condition is the pure *mandala* from the beginning, one enters directly into the knowledge of the *Yoga* and in this way the path of transformation is no longer gradual.

For this reason the final arrival point of the method of Completion is called *rDzogs pa chen po*, or Great Perfection.

The *Atiyoga* is a path that does not depend on the methods of Development and Completion characteristic of the path of transformation; it is very rapid and special; it is the path of self-liberation, of the state which is perfected from the very beginning. Therefore there is a great difference between the two.

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The initiation which leads to maturation in the three series of Higher *Tantras*.

To enter the three series of the higher *Tantras* it is necessary to open the door of the supreme secret Vehicle with initiation. For this reason, if all the conditions are favourable, one should receive the initiation of the *Guhyagarbha* (*gSang ba snying po Tantra*)⁷⁷, which is essential root of the *Mahayoga*; of the *Dupa Do* (*'Dus pa mdo*), which is of the root of the *Anu Yoga*; and of the Five Dhyani or the Five Families of Samantabhadra⁷⁸, which is the root of the *Att Yoga*.

If it is not possible to receive all of these, one should receive at least the initiation of Vajrasattva, which is considered to be the essence that contains all the hundreds of tantric manifestations. One should receive this initiation according to the *Anu Yoga* system and its principle, and from a Master who holds a transmission whose power has not undergone any deterioration.

One should receive it through a 'short lineage', (that is to say a short lineage of Samantabhadra), following the methods contained in the cycle of Teachings contained in the *Secret Treasure of the Vajra of Clear Light* ('*Od gsal rdo rje gsang mdzod*)⁷⁹, an extraordinary method discovered as a *gTerma* by the Master A'dzom 'Brugpa. The 'maturing initiation' of Guru Vajrasattva, should be received strictly adhering to the original text, accompanied by either a short or a long ritual.

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If there should be difficulty even to receive this, it would be sufficient to receive, from a master who has perfect qualifications, the basic initiation of Guru Vajrasattva (this is the essence of all the initiations of the series of Vajrasattva, a *gTerma* discovered by the Master A'dzom 'Brugpa). Receiving this initiation there will arise within one a real understanding of its meaning.

With this understanding as a basis, one can finally enter into a careful study of the view, meditation, behaviour and fruit of the *Mahayoga*, the *Anuyoga*, and the *Attyoga*. After having opened one's eyes well through studying, reasoning and analyzing, one will dissolve all the uncertainties that cause doubt, and through meditation one will try to gain real experiences in such a way as to permit a sure realization of the specific signs of the path.

Applying all these aspects with diligence is the correct way in which a practitioner should enter into the path of the primordial teaching of *rDzogs chen*.

This is way in which one should integrate the profound and secret meaning of essence of the Three Series of Inner *Tantras*.

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The practitioner who is on the path thus becomes a good receptacle for these Teachings, whose meaning he must really understand.

As far as the way of entering into the primordial *mandala* of the Great Perfection or *rDzogs chen* is concerned, the *Necklace of Theoretical Views*, the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

All *dharmas*, being from the beginning fundamentally pure, manifest their dimension as the supreme *mandala*. When someone has studied the vehicle of the method, the instructions, and the teachings and has opened their eyes, that is to say has understood the meaning, one calls this 'seeing the *mandala*'.

When one has understood this principle and has become familiar with it, one calls this 'entering into the *mandala*'. When one enters into the *mandala* and realizes it concretely, one obtains the *stddhis* (realizations)".

Rongzom's Commentary explains this point:

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"In the lower vehicles, one uses *mandalas* of coloured sand; in this way one enters into the *mandala* of the symbol. This method too serves to open one's eyes and to show one the real meaning of the *mandala*.

After having taken initiation one enters into action to obtain the *stddhis*.

Yet in *rDzogs chen* it is not necessary to make, or to be dependent on, this type of thing.

All *dharmas* are self-perfected from the very beginning and this condition is the supreme *mandala*; therefore one enters into this very same dimension.

The method for entering into the *mandala* is to proceed through the three secrets.

First of all one follows and listens with intelligence to the words of the Teaching spoken by a Master who explains the great vehicle without error; this is the way to see the *mandala* and to recognize the characteristics of the divinity.

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When one has, with intelligence, understood the meaning of the application or of the meditation and when this has become familiar, this is called entering into the *mandala* and receiving initiation. After having entered into the *mandala*, one realizes it concretely and obtains the great realizations".

And further:

"To enter into the perfected *mandala* of wisdom one examines, studies and applies the meaning; uniting them together one automatically realizes the self-originated state in the condition of self-perfection. This is the supreme *samaya* of Enlightenment without defect. In this way one can understand what the real meaning of the initiation is".

Then through study and training one should acquire the true state of the initiation in one's own condition.

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The View of the *Mabayoga*.

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"The way to apply the method of (the) Development (stage) is to gradually develop the three *Samadhis* (the three contemplations) and to manifest the *mandala* gradually. If one applies oneself in this way one obtains the result".

Thus one enters into the *mandala*.

With regard to the three contemplations (*Samadhis*), the Commentary called *Nyi 'od, The Light of the Sun*, states:

"The state of contemplation beyond concepts is like the vast sky which spreads everywhere. One remains relaxed in this dimension in the contemplation of the state 'just as it is' (*De bzhin nyid*). When real compassion beyond limits for beings who do not understand this principle arises, this is called the contemplation in which 'all appears' (*Kim snang*).

Thus, like a fish that jumps suddenly out of the clear water, in the same way
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the state of *Rig pa* and the essence of wisdom manifest and one meditates like a HUM or like other syllables: this is called the contemplation of the cause (of the divinity)".

With this explanation one can understand the meaning.

The View of the *Anuyoga*.

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"At the absolute level, the male and female divinities are unborn from the very beginning. The meaning is beyond concepts, beyond the reasoning of the mind and has never moved from the *Dharmadhatu*, the inherent condition of all *dharma*s. In the relative condition one visualizes clearly the dimension and the form of the realized beings who manifest at the same level of purity. With this practice one attains the fruit".

Rongzom's Commentary explains:

"As regards the method of the *Yogatantra* one is capable of meditating or of applying (the visualization) clearly in an instant, in the same state of *rigpa*, which is the primordial state.

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Besides the state undisturbed by thoughts of the condition of the *dharmas* and the meditations on the *mandalas*, such as that of the illusory meditation on the divinity, that which is self-perfected from the beginning, that of the supreme contemplation, of the nature, of contemplation and of form - which are explained separately - they are perfected in the same moment, just as someone who is capable of performing miracles can manifest four actions⁸⁰ at the same time without any contradiction between them.

If one considers the meaning, from the two there manifests and clarifies (a third) one without (anything) moving; that is to say, even if there is no separation or difference in one of them, yet the three are not mixed, they are simultaneously perfected in an instant in the state of *Rigpa*.

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For this reason it is said that it (the one) does not move from the two.

From the beginning absolute, unborn and uninterrupted, the self-perfected nature in the *mandala* of form is self-perfected and has not moved from the state of Enlightenment. This is the first.

The second is the absolute meaning beyond thoughts which has not moved from the state of knowledge of the *Dharmadhatu*.

Not moving from this condition the aggregates⁸¹, the elements (*dhatus*)⁸², the senses and their objects⁸³ manifest clearly like *mandalas* of contemplation.

This way of meditating is called the 'unique clarity', 'the non-dual (condition) of the unique state'. Whatever one sees or on which one meditates is understood as the non-dual condition of the primordial state, unborn and uninterrupted, beyond everything.

The 'three which are not mixed' means that everything on which one meditates in the *mandala* of self-perfection is not mixed with other meditations and contemplations.

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In the *mandala* of higher contemplation all that which appears as the dimension of the body, the ornaments and the symbols are not mixed with others, and nor are the distinct clarity of the *mandala* or the principal *yab* and *yum* with their entourage.

For this reason it is said that they are not mixed. (That is to say they appear in a distinct way in their real condition, and are not conditioned by anything else).

This kind of contemplation is without effort, self-perfected.

At this level, the principle of space and time is the same: this is the way of being of the state of self-perfection in which there is no difference.

At the beginning a little effort is necessary to apply the real state of *Rigpa*".

With this explanation the meaning of the *Anuyoga* is clarified.

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The theoretical View of the *Atiyoga*

The theoretical View of the *Atiyoga* is thus expressed in the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*:

"The method of the Great Perfection is to understand that all *dharmas* of the mundane and supra-mundane spheres, without distinction from the beginning, are the *mandala* of the Body, Voice and Mind (and with this understanding) one meditates."

"With regard to this principle the *Tantra* (*Gubyangarba*) in fact says:

"The various components of the aggregates of the *Vajra* are called the Five Dhyani Buddhas⁸⁴, all the other elements and the objects of the senses are the *mandala* of the *Bodhisattvas*; earth and water are the *Dakini* Locana (sPyanma) and Mamaki; fire and air are the *Dakini* Pandaravasini (Gos dkarmo) and Tara; space is Dhatvishvari (dBings kyi dBang Phyug ma). The three spheres of existence are pure from the beginning. Thus all the phenomena (*dharmas*) of *Samsara* and *Nirvana*

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from the beginning have never been born, but are like a miraculous illusion that has the capacity of action; like the *Tathagatas*, like the ten *Yab Yums*⁸⁵; for this reason all *dharmas* are from the beginning illuminated, and are in their intrinsic nature *Nirvana*.

The five elements⁸⁶ are the nature of the five *Yums*; the five aggregates are the nature of the five *Dhyani* Buddhas; the four consciousnesses⁸⁷ are the nature of the four *Bodhisattvas*⁸⁸; the four objects of the senses⁸⁹ are the nature of the four enchanting goddesses⁹⁰; the four senses⁹¹ are the nature of the *Bodhisattvas*; the four times⁹² (the four seasons) are the nature of the four *Dakini*⁹³; the senses of the body, (its) consciousness, the objects of the senses and the *Bodhicitta* which manifest from these are the nature of the Four Wrathful *Herukas*⁹⁴; the four confirmations⁹⁵ (eternalism, nihilism, etc.)

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are the nature of the four Wrathful *Dakinis*⁹⁶.

The mind consciousness is the nature of the *Vajra* of Samantabhadra, the primordial state; the objects (of consciousness), and the *dharmas*, whether they are aggregate or non-aggregate entities, are the nature of Samantabhadri, (the objective sphere of (the totality) of existence). All of this is perfected, realized, and enlightened from the beginning; this is the nature (of existence itself); it is not produced as a result of the path."

Thus the meaning of the expression 'the inseparability of the mundane and supra-mundane *dharmas*' is clarified.

Rongzom's Commentary explains the meaning of this:

"All *dharmas* (phenomena) are linked to our passions and our emotions, and from these manifest *Samsara*, and cause and effect.

The purified *dharma* is the cause and effect of *Nirvana*. These are inseparable.

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One might ask: 'If one distinguishes (between one *dharma* or phenomena and another), what is there to distinguish? And why is it said that they are inseparable?'

'To distinguish' means that all *dharmas* have a specific characteristic of their own; analyzing in both the absolute and the relative sense, they can be seen to have both general and specific characteristics; one can say, for example, that this one is white, and that one is black, or that the characteristic of one specific *dharma* is of a certain specific kind.

One can analyze all *dharmas* in this way, and then one can say that there does exist something to distinguish.

'There is nothing to distinguish (between them) and 'inseparable' means that all *dharmas* dwell in the dimension of the *mandala* of the three *Vajras* of body, voice and mind, and in this nature there is no duality. Ordinary people and those who hold extreme views analyze the *dharmas* according to their own characteristic ways

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of seeing, while the Buddhists affirm that the characteristics of the *dharmas* (phenomena) are inseparable in the *Dharma* (ultimate nature of truth). When it is said that there is no separation or distinction or dualism, this means that the nature of all the *dharmas* is like this from the beginning, and that one cannot add or change something by effort".

The above quotation explains and clarifies the View of *rDzogs chen*.

The meaning of this quotation taken from the root *Tantra gSang ba sNyung po* is explained by the related Commentary:

"The body of the *Vajra* and the aggregates are the Five *Dhyant* Buddhas. The five aggregates with their components and the self-originated understanding of uninterrupted wisdom are the accumulations of merits.

Not to seek any confirmation in this regard is to accumulate immediately present wisdom.

'Buddha' means perfected, automatically purified since the beginning, without renouncing or abandoning the consciousness of the two limits, free from any obstacle to knowledge whatever; it (Buddha) means one who has developed the non-dual dimension of the nature of the *dharmas*, wisdom and knowledge that is beyond any limit. The base and the five aggregates are purified; the self-originated wisdom is perfected and the five wisdoms manifest through self-originated vision.

The five wisdoms⁹⁷ appear to those who follow the Teaching as the five *Dhyant* Buddhas; form without interruption manifests as Vairocana; the aggregate of sensation manifests as Ratnasambhava;

consciousness manifests as the Buddha Amitabha; action manifests as Aksobhya; perception manifests as Vajrasattva.

Thus one can understand their meaning and what they symbolize, which are also explained in the same way in other texts".

It is necessary to know how the various interpretations use the names of the five aggregates. In this phrase the term *grags* is used, which signifies how one clarifies the meaning indicated.

"All the elements, the senses and their objects are the *mandala* of the *Bodhisattvas*. The senses and the objects of the senses are twelve in number: the elements (Tibetan: *khams*; Sanskrit: *dhātu*) are eighteen in number: for example through the organ of sight arises the consciousness (of sight); when one sees or perceives an object with the four organs of the senses, the elements become twelve in number:

the *khams* of the eyes, the *khams* of form, and the *khams* of the consciousness of the eyes are twelve. Uniting together the elements and the aggregates relative to the senses of the body, with the consciousness of the body, with the objects of the senses of the body, with the consciousness of the mind and the objects of the mind, that is to say, with all the *dharmas* aggregated and non-aggregated, as also the four seasons, the four limits (eternalism, nihilism, and so on), and the essence of the perceptions of the three *dharmas* of the body, they become numerous.

The *mandala* of the *Bodhisattvas* are the five pure aggregates.

Just as the whole world is lit up in an instant by the sun, so also the wisdom of the state of self-originated *Rig pa* which possesses the three *Dharmas*⁹⁸ (essence, nature, and energy) and is self-perfected and pure from the beginning, the five elements

manifest like the *mandala* of the male and female *Bodhisattvas* in the dimension of wisdom. As is explained at the beginning of the text, the four consciousnesses manifest as the four *Bodhisattvas* of the four directions. The four organs of the senses at the level of the pure dimension manifest as the four *Bodhisattvas* of the intermediate directions (north-east, etc.). The four forms manifest as the four *Yums* of the *Bodhisattvas*, Maitreya and so on, of the intermediate directions. The three *dharmas* of the body and consciousness, appear as the four wrathful manifestations. The four limits manifest as the four wrathful *Yums*. The mind manifests as Samantabhadra. The objects of the mind, aggregated and non-aggregated, manifest as Samantabhadri.

For this reason it is called the *mandala* of the *Bodhisattvas*. For what reason can the *mandala* of the *Bodhisattvas* be expressed by the wrathful male and female manifestations?

Because the *Bodhisattvas* manifest according to the needs and the characteristics of beings; to those who have a wrathful character, they manifest in a wrathful form, but for those who are by nature peaceful, even if the manifestations appear wrathful, the state of mind is still (that of) the *Bodhisattva*. Earth and water are the *Dakṇi* sPyan ma and Mamaki. Fire and air are the *Dakṇis* Gos dkar and sGrol ma; space is the *Dakṇi* dByings kyi dbang phyug ma. In the *chakra* of the heart there are the eight petals of the channels; in them manifest the essence of the Buddha, which is the nature of the five elements; the essence of earth is the channel like a thread of white silk; the essence of blood is like the colour of the *mtshal cog la ma* (*mtshal cog la ma* is a red mineral which the people of India use to paint their foreheads).

The essence of heat is like the heat of a mirror placed in the sun.

The essence of breathing is like the vapour of gold under the earth.

The essence of the sky is like a *thigle*, as small as a pea, which represents (the) indestructible life (force), which though in reality it has no colour, can manifest all colours.

If the yogi understands this in practice, his knowledge is complete, and the impure elements together with the elements of the objects become pure like the condition of the sky. If one does not understand the internal essence of the elements of wisdom, one creates the reasoning subject, which, through the consideration of subject and object, the potentiality of the dimension of space and the impurity of the samsaric elements - earth, water, fire, air and space - manifest as the base and cause, even if they have never moved from the nature of the mind and even if they appear in this same condition. To examine the five elements - earth, water, fire, air and space - finding the purity of their own condition, the inseparability of vision and Voidness,

the self-perfectedness of the nature of the mind, which is equanimity, is the *Yum*.

The five elements are non-dual; one who concentrates on the visualization of the Development stage creates the five aggregates. The *Yum* is inseparable or non-dual in relation to the five aggregates. The *Yum* of Vairocana, Sangs rgyas Spyan, is the pure dimension of earth; the *Yum* of Ratnasambhava, Mamaki, is the pure dimension of water; the *Yum* Gos dkarmo, who is the *Yum* of Amitabha, is the pure dimension of fire; the *Yum* of Aksobhya, Tara, is the pure dimension of Air; the *Yum* of Vajrasattva, Kuntu bzangmo (Samantabhadri) is the pure dimension of space.

Thus wisdom and the dimension of the five aggregates, the senses and the objects of the senses appear. The three worlds are from the beginning the pure dimension of the Buddha.

As regards the three worlds - those of the passions, of form, and of the absence of form - the characteristics of the related *dharmas* begin, exist and are destroyed, and the internal differences whose characteristics are infinite, correspond to the senses, the elements (*dhātu*) and the aggregates.

To find oneself in the clarity of total non-dual wisdom, inseparable from the visions of the state of *Rig pa* of one's own mind and to understand that it has always been like that from the very beginning is called the dimension of the Buddha.

In the state of the mind, the *Rig pa*, vision can appear in any form and yet its substance is not concrete.

The manifestation of the *Nirmanakaya* brings benefit according to the desires of sentient beings. The *Dharmakaya* is the self-perfected dimension of the innate essence of the *dharmas*.

the qualities and the attainments of Samsara and Nirvana which manifest clearly, distinctly and totally perfected in this dimension, are the *Sambhogakaya*; beyond this even the name of the three worlds, of the three dimensions, do not exist".

This clarifies the meaning of the quotation which together with others permits one to understand the way in which the meaning of *rDzogs chen* is explained.

In the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* one reads:

"The ten directions, the three times and the three worlds, all aggregated and non-aggregated *dharmas* do not exist beyond one's own mind. This is what is said:

"The distinct understanding of one's own mind is (none other than) the Buddha or the *Bodhisattvas*. It is the three worlds themselves. It is the elements themselves."

This quotation is taken from the text *Khams gsum nam rgyal gyi rtogs pa*⁹⁹ (*The Conqueror of the Three Worlds Tantra*). Rongzom's Commentary explains in this regard:

"Thought distinct from the mind means that one has the perfect knowledge of the nature of the mind.

On this topic the *gSang ba 'Dus pa* explains:

"When the mind dwells in illusion, this is Samsara, but if one understands one's own real condition without illusion, this is *Byang chub*, realization".

This is not an explanation only relevant to *rDzogs chen* since it is also confirmed by the lesser vehicles.

(Note to the text: to be specific, in *rDzogs chen* it is explained that) Even if all *dharmas* appear as the mind, the appearance itself is the nature of the Buddha. It is necessary to understand in this way".

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"All *dharmas* dwell in the mind;

the mind is in space,

space is not to be found in any specific place:

for this reason it is said that the essence of all the *dharmas* is empty. All *dharmas* are pure from the beginning; all *dharmas* are radiant light; all *dharmas* are in their essential nature Nirvana, they are beyond suffering; all *dharmas* are totally enlightened and perfected.

This is the Great Perfection".

The meaning of this quotation is explained in Rongzom's Commentary:

"All *dharmas* have their origin in the mind, and the nature of mind is like space; the nature of space has no characteristics: this is the meaning. All *dharmas* are beyond the *dharmas* in so far as it is subject and object, and there is nothing whatsoever to confirm; one cannot say or confirm that this arose from that. In the same way the impurities of the passions have never from the beginning existed, and for this reason one speaks of (primordial) purity. Even obstacles, like darkness, never having existed from the beginning, are totally light.

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There does not exist either thesis or antithesis,
the nature (of existence) is Nirvana.

It is beyond the diminishment of the two obstacles¹⁰⁰ and the accumulation of the two merits; it is perfected and illuminated from the beginning: this is the meaning of the Great Perfection".

The way in which confidence in the Great Perfection arises.

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states

"The way one should have confidence in the Great Perfection (Note to the text: the perfection (meant here is) of the accumulation of merit and wisdom and the perfection of the qualities of the fruit)

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involves **the four understandings (*rTogs pa*) of knowledge** which are: the understanding of the single cause; the understanding through letters; the understanding through empowerment, and true (direct) understanding.

Understanding through the single cause means that in the absolute condition all *dharmas* are unborn, undifferentiated and unseparated; (yet) at the relative level they manifest, in an unreal manner, like an illusion, but even if this is so, there is no distinction between them. Unborn means that they are like reflections of the moon in water, they appear in different ways, unreal, and yet they have their own capacity (of functioning); the illusion or *Maya* has no inherent self-nature, no innate concrete essence. For this reason the relative and the absolute condition are non-dual and have the same cause.

Understanding through the letters:

all unborn *dharmas* are the letter A, which is the nature of the condition of the voice.

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The unborn condition manifests as *Maya* (which is) unreal like an illusion, yet has the capacity of functioning (in action). This capacity manifests as the letter O, which is the dimension of the body. The state of the mind, the state of *Rig pa* which understands this meaning, the wisdom of the illusion beyond centre and boundaries is the letter OM, the nature of the state of the mind, the dimension of the mind.

Understanding through empowerment.

In the same way that a piece of white cotton can be dyed red by the potentiality of that colour, all *dharmas* can manifest the possibility of Enlightenment through the power of the single cause and (the nature) of the letters.

Real (or direct) understanding.

All *dharmas* dwell from the beginning in the dimension of Enlightenment. This principle is not contradicted by the *Lung* or by the *Upadesa* (*Man ngag*), nor is it to be confirmed solely by the words of the *Lung* or the *Upadesa*. 251

The meaning is really discovered in one's own state of *Rig pa* through having confidence in the Path. When one discovers the knowledge of the meaning of the four understandings (*rTogs pa*), this itself is the path of the Yogi. This does not imply the production of a cause and the attainment of a fruit, but a real discovery in which one believes and has confidence".

Rongzom's Commentary clarifies what has been said with the following examples:

"The quality of gold is known through burning it, cutting it, and rubbing it. Burning it one understands if it is real gold or not; cutting it one discovers if it has more or less impurities; 252

and rubbing it on a stone it shows its qualities.

The meaning of knowledge is like gold: checking and finding that there are no contradictions with the *Lung* (that is, the original texts) and that in general there are no errors in the way knowledge is established, is the same as burning gold to examine it.

Sometimes it is not easy to understand the real meaning and significance of the *Lung* (original texts); yet this defect can be overcome using the explanations and methods of the *Upadesa* (that is to say, the defect of not understanding the meaning of the *Lung* can be overcome through the *Upadesa*). This is like cutting gold to understand it.

Even if it should happen that although there is no contradiction with the *Lung* or the *Upadesa*, one finds that one is still only following the words and does not succeed in integrating the meaning into one's own condition, then in addition to basing oneself on the *Lung*, and on the *Upadesa*, that is on their words, 253

one should believe with firmness in (discerning) the meaning in the depths of one's mind; in this way one can really understand, and one can overcome this kind of defect; this is like rubbing gold to discover its quality.

Real knowledge is the characteristic of discriminating *Prajna*; when with the power of the practice one really understands the meaning, this is the characteristic of the fruit".

In this way everything is clarified.

With regard to the method for completing or reaching the final state of *rDzogs chen*, the state of the Great or Total Perfection, The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"The meaning of perfection has three characteristics:

1) the four understandings (*rTogs pa*) are the characteristic of knowledge
2) training oneself and becoming familiar (with it) are the characteristic of the ways through which one enters into knowledge. 254

3) Making (knowledge) real through habit and familiarization is the characteristic of the fruit".

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* further explains that there are three reasons related to the three characteristics:

"The three characteristics show what the relationship, the reason and the specific reason are.

The relationship: all *dharmas* - whether those linked to the emotions or purified of emotions - are from the beginning the condition or essence of the body, voice and mind, which is the dimension of Enlightenment of one's own nature and potentiality.

Understanding this principle is the characteristic of the knowledge of the cause.

This is linked to the meaning of the cause which brings one to attain total supreme realization.

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The reason: everything which is called emotion or pure dimension, the five medicines¹⁰¹, the five nectars¹⁰², and so on, are perfected and Enlightened from the very beginning; they are a single level, in which there is nothing at all to accept or to reject.

Applying the meaning in this way is the characteristic of the way in which one enters into knowledge; it is the cause, the reason for the attainment of supreme realization.

The particular reason: in the dimension of impartiality of the state of illumination which is pure from the beginning, all considerations of *dharmas*, passions, emotions or the pure dimensions of these, the five medicines, the five nectars, and so on, are perfected from the beginning; there is nothing whatsoever to reject or accept.

For this reason the existence of Samsara is from the beginning the nature of Enlightenment, the perfected characteristic of Nirvana;

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it is the characteristic of the fruit that one realizes oneself concretely in the *chakras* of the infinite qualities of the dimension of the body, the voice and the mind.

This is the particular reason, also called the double reason".

This explanation clarifies the meaning.

In the Commentary by Rongzom one reads:

"Someone might think: '(The principle of) cause and effect, and the (notion of something being attained as a) fruit (or result) are the same as (what is found in) the lesser vehicles, as is confirmed by the relevant texts. So why, when in *rDzogs chen* one talks about (the nature of the individual as being) 'Enlightened from the beginning', is this not in contradiction with (the principle of) cause and effect, and the (attainment of a) fruit?'

The explanation is as follows: for the *Mahayoga* and the lesser vehicles such aspects of practice as the near-attainments (*bsNyen bsgrub*)

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are considered to be fundamental principles for attaining realization; yet in the *rDzogs chen* teaching is it not necessary to use them.

(In *rDzogs chen*) The four *bsNyen sgrub* are automatically perfected without effort in the practice; they are not considered to be something really produced by cause and effect, nor as a fruit (or result of something).

The real meaning is the *La bzla ba* of the *Upadesa* (which means finding oneself beyond any concept (literally: consideration) whatsoever)".

This clarifies the meaning.

With regard to **the four *bsNyen sgrub*** The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"*bsNyen pa*, *Nye ba'i bsNyen pa*, *sGrub pa* and *sGrup pa chen po* are principles for attaining realization.

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Near-attainment (*bsNyen pa*)

The meaning of *bsNyen pa* is the knowledge of the primordial state, *Bodhicitta*: all *dharmas* are from the beginning of the nature of Enlightenment, there is nothing to produce or to correct with antidotes. To understand this is *bsNyen pa*.

Greater-near attainment (*Nye ba'i bsNyen pa*)

Nye ba'i bsNyen pa means recognizing oneself as the divinity: all *dharmas* are from the beginning of the same nature as the Buddha; since this is so, we too, from the beginning are of the nature of the divinity; it is not necessary to produce something new.

Attainment (*sGrub pa*)

sGrub pa means to understand that from the beginning what one visualizes is the great *Yum*, the condition of space of the sky in which the elements - earth, water, fire and air - manifest, together with their functions.

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Great attainment (*sGrub pa chen po*)

sGrub pa chen po, great or total attainment, is the union of *Thab* and *Shes rab*, Method and *Prajna*. The *Prajna* of the five *Yums*, arisen from the *Shunyata* of the space of the *Yums*, the five aggregates manifested as Buddhas, and the *Yabs*, are from the beginning unified without anything in particular being done; the nature (of reality) manifests as the five *Bodhisattvas* in *Yab-Yum*; this is from the beginning the meaning of Enlightenment. Just as *Maya* manifests in the illusory dimension, in the same way the manifestation of the supreme condition of *Mayic* bliss is the cause itself of the bliss, which is also manifestation beyond characteristics, the condition of space in the self-perfected dimension, which conquers the four demons¹⁰³, manifesting the final arrival point of realization.

Thus one overcomes the four demons through the four *bsNyen sgrub*.

The Commentary by Rongzom states:

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"In general the different texts explain various methods for conquering the demons. This text explains the way to overcome the four demons through the four *bsNyen sgrub*.

Through the innate (unborn) contemplation that is characteristic of the knowledge of one's own primordial state, one conquers the demon of death; through the contemplation on *Maya* (illusion), characterized by recognizing oneself as the divinity, one conquers the demon of aggregation; through the contemplation on immateriality, characterized by the visualization of the *Yum*, one overcomes the demon of passion; through contemplation beyond concepts, which is like space, one overcomes the demon of distraction.

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He who has the potentiality to conquer the four demons follows a perfect and pure Path; this Path dwells in the self-perfected state beyond effort, and it is a great and total Path".

This explanation permits one to understand more clearly.

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The meaning of *rDzogs chen* according to The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*

The Great Master Padmasambhava explained the method of the three inner *Tantras* which consists of the unification of the three stages of Development, Completion and Great Perfection.

Now an explanation is given of the *rDzogs pa Chen po*, the Great Perfection, through the root of the *Mahayoga sGyu 'phrul gsang ba snying po Tantra* (*Guhyagarbha*), to show how the final meaning of the *Mahayoga* is *rDzogschen*. The text (of the *Guhyagarbha*) is amply quoted for this purpose, as was the *Ghuyasamaja Tantra* (*gSang ba 'Dus pa*); one can therefore understand that the principles involved are in agreement with the three series of Inner *Tantras*, but this nevertheless is an explanation of the Path of Self-Liberation of the primordial state or *Atiyoga*.

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One can arrive at an understanding through deep study of the root *Tantras*, the *Lungs*, and the *Upadesa* texts of the *Atiyoga*.

When the duration of life of human beings was 80,000 years, there was a Master called *gZhon nu Rolba rNam par brTse ba*, who transmitted the Teaching of a *Tantra* of *rDzogs chen* concerning the primordial state. In our epoch the Master Garab Dorje re-transmitted, clarified and divulged the *rDzogs chen* Teaching contained in that *Tantra*, which is called the *Kun byed rgyal po*.

The *Kun byed rgyal po* states:

"In the *Mahayoga*, those who desire the Vajradhara (that is to say the realization of Vajradhara) enter into the path of the Method and *Prajna* and into the *mandala* of the pure dimension of their own condition applying the four *bsNyen sgrub*. The total bliss of the *Atiyoga* is the primordial state, which is beyond effort and beyond practice.

If there is effort, this is an obstacle; effort is considered useful (literally: contemplated) in the *Mahayoga* system, but the state of *rDzogs chen* on the other hand is beyond effort.

If one applies *rDzogs chen* with effort, one falls into the path of the *Mahayoga*.

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In the *Anuyoga*, realization is considered to be non-dual; entering into the Path of the Wisdom of space (*dByings*), the cause of all the *dharmas* manifested and perceived is the space of the pure dimension; the fruit (or effect) is the wisdom which manifests as a *mandala*.

The total bliss of the *Atiyoga* is the primordial state, which is beyond cause and effect. If one enters into the consideration of cause and effect, one is obstructed by the *Anuyoga* system, since *rDzogs chen* is beyond cause and effect.

If, in the *rDzogs chen* Teaching, one holds a view which confirms (considers) cause and effect, this is the same as falling into the path of accepting cause and effect of the *Anuyoga* system.

These are the obstacles, the mistaken views and ways of behaving.

Great *Bodhisattva*, the view and way of behaving in *rDzogs chen* is not the same as that of those who apply cause and effect.

Bodhicitta, the primordial state: the nature of the view and the way of behaving are like space, like the sky, beyond the analysis of thought. Those who analyze and think do not attain a primordial state like the sky. Thinking and analyzing are obstacles, a mistaken path.

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If the nature of the view and the way of behaving are not like the sky and there is confirmation of subject and object, one does not attain the real meaning of the *Bodhicitta*, of the primordial state, which is like the sky. If a concept of subject and object arises, this is an obstacle, a mistaken path."

There are many explanations of this kind which can help one to understand.

When the duration of human life was one hundred years, gShen rab Mi bo, the Bon Master, communicated the *rDzogs pa chen po* Teaching orally in the country of Shang Shung. This oral Teaching contains some root verses. In the original text called the 'Twelve Minor *Tantras*' which is included in the *Shang Shung sNyan brgyud*, one reads:

"The base of everything is one's own original state of *Rtg pa*.
a unique state, a great self-originated *thig le*, how wonderful!"

These words explain the condition of the Base.

"The path is self-perfected, there is no place
one has to travel to, it is beyond effort.

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Beyond effort, unique *thig le*, how wonderful!"

This explains the condition of the Path.

"The fruit is self-perfected as is its condition.
Unique *thig le*, self-perfected state, how wonderful!"

This explains the real meaning of the fruit, the true and pure meaning which cannot be seen or confirmed in any way.

"The real meaning is free of thoughts.
Unique *thig le* beyond limits, how wonderful!"

This explains the condition of the View.

"There is nothing to meditate on the real pure meaning.
Unique *thig le* beyond meditation, how wonderful!"

This explains the condition of the Meditation.

"The pure meaning is beyond a (limited) way of behaving.
Unique *thig le*, supreme behaviour, how wonderful!"

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This explains the condition of the Way of Behaving.

"The mind is like the sky.
Unique *thig le*, beyond examples, how wonderful!"

This explains the condition of the example.

"The characteristic of the mind is really and truly the nature of the mind.
Unique non-dual *thig le*, how wonderful!"

This explains the characteristic condition.

"The meaning of the mind is the condition of the *Bon* (of phenomena).
Unique inexpressible *thig le*, how wonderful!"

This explains the meaning condition of the meaning.

"In the unborn dimension of space abides uninterrupted wisdom".
Unique *thi gle* of the uninterrupted unborn state,

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Unique *thig le* of realization, how wonderful!"

These twelve fundamental verses which explain the same number of basic principles are known as the 'Twelve minor *Tantras* of the unique sphere of the *Bodhicitta* (*Byang sems thig le nyag gcig gi rgyud bu chung bcu gnyis*). These were written down and clarified by the great master Gyer chen sNang bzher Lod po for which reason we have today both the root *Tantra* and the commentary, and these texts too show clearly the fundamental principle of the Great Perfection of *Dzogchen*.

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Chapter Six

The Systems of meditation

The Meditation of the *Mahayoga*.

If all the circumstances necessary to practise the *Mahayoga* are present, one should apply the Development and Completion stages on the basis of original texts such as the *sGyu 'phrul gsang ba snying po* (*Guhyagarbha Tantra*). The final arrival point of both stages is integration into the state of *rigpa*, the state of the *rDzogs chen*. In fact, as Padmasambhava explained, the final arrival point of the *Mahayoga* is *Dzogchen*, for which reason the practice should not be different from the principle of this View. If one does not have the possibility to dedicate oneself to the practice of the two stages of Development and Completion characteristic of the *Mahayoga*, since the essence of all this profound Teaching is our own self-originated condition of the essence of the *Vajra* - the real naked condition of the primordial state - then, in order to have knowledge of this, the practitioner should work on the basis of his own experiences of bliss, clarity and the absence of discursive thought (*Mi rtog pa*)

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All practice is linked to these (three) experiences (bliss, clarity and absence of thought); and all the special practices, related to the methods of the *Upadesa* are linked to the empowerment (literally: potentiality) and the compassion of the Master. Therefore, understanding that the Master is *kun 'dus yid bzhin nor bu*, the Jewel that fulfills and unites all one's desires, we should imagine that in front of ourselves there manifest, in the dimension of the five colours of the *thigle*, all the *Tathagatas*, the Three Roots, and the Three Jewels, unified with Guru Padmasambhava, who manifests in the form called *sNang srid zil gnon*.

Pronouncing the sound OM, the three states of the Body, the Voice, and the Mind, of all Enlightened beings manifest.

Sounding 'OM A HUM', which represents the unification of the three states of the body, voice and mind of the Three Jewels, of the three roots, of the *Tathagatas* of the three times and of all the *Rig 'dzin* of the *Attyoga* (present and active in) the universe, they and their potentiality manifest in the form of the white OM, the red A and the blue HUM, respectively, in the three seats (head, throat, heart) of the Master Padmasambhava.

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Pronouncing 'VAJRA GURU' one invites the three states of all the Masters who have transmitted the knowledge of the real condition of the state of the *Vajra*, whether in a direct or an indirect way, in the form of lights of the three colours, white, red, and blue, which unify in the three syllables at the three seats of the Guru, dissolving into the three syllables.

Pronouncing 'PADMA THOD THRENG TSEL' one sets in action the wisdom of all the Masters, through this secret name of Guru Padmasambhava.

The words 'VAJRA SAMAYA JA' (which one pronounces next) represent the '*Vajra* promise' of all Enlightened beings which is set in action through the *mudra* of *samaya*, the *mantra*, and the visualization of light which expands (out from the three syllables) and is then re-absorbed (into them).

When one pronounces the *mantra* 'KAYA SIDDHI OM WAKKA SIDDHI A CITTA SIDDHI HUM', accompanying this with the *mudra* of the three pointed *Vajra* (touching in turn the three places of the three seats at the head, throat, and heart of

one's own body), one invites the potentiality of the three states from the three seats of the Master in the form of white, red and blue light, which vanish into one's own three seats.

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When one pronounces the *mantra* 'JNANA SIDDHI A', touching the three seats of one's own body with the *mudra* of the voidness of the *Dharmadhatu*, one visualizes that all the empowerments of the three states are received simultaneously and instantaneously.

Pronouncing the *mantra* SARVA SIDDHI PHALA HUM A one visualizes that one has obtained all the realizations, both supreme and common, and thus one continues to communicate, activating the wisdom of the Master who is the 'Jewel who fulfills all desires and who unifies everything', reciting or chanting the essential *mantra*.

At the end, sounding OM A HUM, the form of the Master dissolves into the three white, red and blue lights, which vanish into one's three seats. Thus in one's own forehead, throat and heart, within spheres of five colours there appear the three syllables white OM, red A, and blue HUM, clear and limpid, and luminous, with their own natural sound; in this way one unifies the state of one's own mind with the three *Vajras* of the Master.

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Then one concentrates on the three syllables, one after the other, applying the method of breathing known as the 'recitation of the *Vajra*'¹⁰⁴, which is the best way to integrate one's own 'three gates' of body, voice and mind into the dimension of the three *Vajras*.

To conclude the practice, one relaxes, remaining in this dimension of clarity and pure instantaneous presence; to continue in this state is truly the final arrival point of all the stages of Development and Completion. One finishes integrating this continuation with the Song of the *Vajra*.

This is an extremely important and wonderful method

for applying the essence of the three inner *Tantras* and integrating them with the state of those who follow the *rDzog chen* Teaching.

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The practice of the *Anuyoga*.

Those who are on the path should receive the initiation and instructions on the practice of dPal chen gSang bdag *Heruka* (Vajrapani), of Guru Drag po, and of the Queen of all the *Dakinis* (Simhamukha), these three are called the Three Roots; that which one receives from the Three Roots is considered to be the base; the base of the contemplation is like the dark blue syllable HUM, (by 'like' is meant that it could be another syllable other than HUM). With the sound of the syllable one instantly manifests as the appropriate divinity, with his or her own *mandala*, which in the real sense are the same as the qualities of one's own self-perfectedness; one manifests (this) as clearly as all the stars manifest clearly in the sky. Visualizing the heart syllable surrounded by the *mantra* in movement, one sounds the *mantra*, or else one sends out and re-absorbs light (*'phro 'du*) from the heart syllable inviting the empowerment of all the *Tathagatas* and of the ocean of *Rig 'dzin*, as one recites the *mantra*.

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The choice of whether or not one includes this phase depends on secondary causes (that is to say on the mood and condition of the practitioner; if one has more time one can do the *'phro du*, otherwise one recites the *mantra* straight away).

During the contemplation of the *mantra* it is important to always maintain the clear presence of the divinity and the *mantra* which turns (around the central syllable); the

sound of the *mantra* too, its natural sound, must be integrated with the voice of the one who is reciting it. *Mantras* are recited in this way.

After having finished the contemplation related to the recitation of the *mantra*, one carries out the *bzlog pa* (*Dogpa*) or the 'sending away of negative energies', with the aim of clearing away and eliminating all possible interruptions, provocations, and hindrances to supreme realization, in particular those deriving from the Eight Classes¹⁰⁵; in this way all negativities are transformed into favourable circumstances.

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If the practitioner has created some problem with the *samaya* through his own behaviour, it can be purified in this way: by communicating with the protectors of the teachings and with the *Dakinis* just visualizing the central syllable HUM, or otherwise, if one wants to dedicate more time to this, one can use the *mantras*, the *mudra*, and the contemplation as they are explained in the longer practice contained in the book of *thun* (of the Dzog-Chen Community), making offerings.

In particular, on the full moon days, the new moon, the tenth day of the waxing moon, and the tenth of the waning moon (the twenty fifth day), one can prepare material offerings, and imagine offerings as infinite as clouds, dedicating them with the *Ganapuja* to the ocean of Enlightened beings and of the Three Roots, and particularly to all the protectors of the Teachings and the *Dakinis*, to correct and purify any interruptions of all one's *Samayas*. If a practitioner maintains the *Samaya* in a pure way he will not have interruptions on the Path. This can clearly be seen from the biographies of Masters of the past.

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The Practice of the *Atiyoga*.

To enter into the practice of *Atiyoga*, the first thing that is necessary is that the practitioner distinguish between the mind and the nature of the mind (that is to say, the state of *Rig pa* of the mind). This system of the separation of the mind from the state of *Rig pa*, called the '*kbhor 'das ru shan*', which means 'The Separation of *Samsara* from *Nirvana*', together with the various types of *Semdzin* (literally: methods for 'keeping the mind stopped' (stopping the mind)), are the two principal methods that must be applied.

The '*kbhor 'das ru shan*' or separation of *Samsara* from *Nirvana*.

To be conditioned and distracted by the illusory visions arising from the mind is *Samsara* or transmigration, while finding oneself in the state (of pure instantaneous presence of) *Rig pa* is *Nirvana*. These special and profound methods succeed in separating (or distinguishing) the mind from the state of *Rig pa* of the practitioner, and for this reason they are called 'The separation of *Samsara* from *Nirvana*', '*kbhor 'das ru shan*'. The *ru shan* include three principal subdivisions:

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- 1- the outer separation, or outer *ru shan*
- 2- the separation, or *ru shan*, of the three gates (body, voice, and mind),
- 3- the inner separation, or inner *ru shan*.

The Outer *ru shan*.

In the *Supreme Wisdom* (*Ye shes bLa ma*), a text of instructions on the practice of the *Longchen Nyinngthig* (*Klong chen snying thig*) (by Jigmed Linpa) one reads:

In the *Tenbu* (*bsTan bu*)¹⁰⁶, concerning the 'outer separation', it is written:

"First of all, to eliminate the strong attachment which we feel to our three existences of body, voice and mind we have to begin by applying a (particular) way of behaving". The way of applying this, is explained in the root *Tantra*¹⁰⁷:

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"With the body we should walk, sit, turn, and assume different positions, stretching out or folding our various limbs in all the possible ways of behaving of the forms of the beings of the six *Lokas*, just as they come into the mind.

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This blocks or reverses the actions of our three existences of body, voice and mind that are created by *karma* and by unconscious predispositions (*bag chags*), and in order not to create obstacles relating to the seventh *Samaya* of the *Tantras* (which is that one should not divulge secret practices), one goes to an isolated and silent place. There we make offerings and invoke the Local Guardians (*gzhi bdag*), in order not to provoke them with inappropriate actions.

Then we form the thought: "Now for the benefit of all beings I wish to carry out the separation of *Samsara* from *Nirvana* with body, voice and mind, so that in future I will not fall into *Samsara* again." With this intention one strips naked, and mentally takes on oneself the freezing and heat which are felt in the hells; the hunger and thirst (which are suffered) by the *pretas*; the condition of slavery suffered by animals; the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death characteristic of humans; the arguments and fights of the *Asuras* (the semigods); (the suffering) of the gods when they fall into the lower states when their *karma* is exhausted, etc., and one takes on their forms. Furthermore one runs, jumps, turns, stretches out and folds one's limbs etc., doing anything that comes into one's mind,

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without any plan.

In the same way, to carry out the separation of the voice, it is written in the *Sound Which Surpasses All Tantra* (*sGra thal 'gyur*):

"With the aim of not falling again (into *Samsara*) because of words, one imitates the voices, beautiful or ugly,

of the divinities, of the *Nagas*, of the *Yaks* *bas*, of the *Dri zas*, *Grul bums* and *Khyan Jugs* (*Gandharvas*, *Kumbhandas*, and *Khyabjugs*).

In short, one applies with the voice whatever language of the beings of the six *Lokas* comes into mind, and thus one lets out shouts and different sounds without (the interference of the mind in) choosing some of them and rejecting others.

With regard to the separation of the mind, it is written in the *Only Son of the Buddhas* (*Sangs rgyas sras gCig*) (a text of the *sNying Thig Upadesa*):

"One thinks of many different things, which give pleasure or displeasure, happiness or suffering, (one thinks) of that which is permanent or impermanent, etc., of the way of seeing, of meditating and of behaving, of what is related to the *Dharma* or to its opposite, (to things which cause) attachment, hatred or mental obscuration, of virtuous and non-virtuous actions, etc.'.

Thus one applies directly whatever thought or behaviour arises related to the past, the present or the future, whether it is virtuous or non-virtuous, until one is completely tired out. When one is feels tired

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then one should relax, and observe what is present (in one's consciousness).

In the same way, as is written in the *Deje* (*'Das rjes*)¹⁰⁸, a text of the *sNying Thig Upadesa*:

"One also imagines oneself applying the actions of the Three Jewels", imagining oneself assuming the lotus position and sitting in contemplation; from one's forehead one imagines that rays of light shine out; one imagines oneself dressed like the Buddha or a monk; one adopts a peaceful and humble attitude, and with the voice one imagines that one is reciting *Sutras* such as *The Essence of the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajnaparamitahrdayasutra)*. One thus applies all the different ways of behaving with the mind, and at the same time one assumes the aspect of the wrathful divinities in their 'nine dances' (the wrathful manifestations appear in nine aspects: elegant, heroic, terrible, and wrathful, etc.; and one pronounces the sounds RULU, HUM, HUM, or PHAT PHAT etc., and one trains oneself thus to take different attitudes both with the body and the voice. As is in fact written in the *tantra*:

"One pronounces sacred sounds (like) *mantra* and prayers, sounds of the *Dharmas*, (phrases) about visions that exist or don't exist, logical statements and mental analysis."

Some systems apply the *ru shan* together (i.e.: simultaneously with the body, the voice, and the mind),

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while some other systems apply them one by one (for the body, the voice and the mind).

Dedicating oneself to this practice for half a month, eleven days, or a week, etc., as a temporary benefit this practice will enable us to stop our attachment related to the body, the voice and the mind, and one will cut the continuation of our link with *Samsara*; as the definitive result, the body will mature in the clear light, the voice will purify itself in the *chakra* of the letters, and the mind will liberate itself in the state of *Rig pa*. The *Tantra* explains that the benefits of this practice are infinite.

To conclude, as is written in the *Wang Nyewar Togpa Tantra (dBang nye bar rtogs pa)*¹⁰⁹:

"Those who have practised the *Ru shan* separation do not return to the three worlds again".

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As we have read, it is very important to practise as has been explained. For this reason it is necessary to consider the condition of every practitioner and to apply the practice according to what is possible. If the circumstances are not appropriate, it is not correct to practise it and one must act with awareness according to the circumstances.

At the end of each session of practice of *ru shan* one should relax the body, voice and mind into their natural condition. This is called 'relaxing observing the condition of one's own consciousness after the practice'. This principle must absolutely not be lacking, because it is one of the primary aims of the *ru shan*. One should practice this in a correct way and serious way.

The *ru shan* of the three existences.

The *Wish Fulfilling Jewel (Yid bzhi Nor bu)*, belonging to the cycle of the *Longsel Nyinthig (Klong gsal sNying thig)* (rediscovered by Ratna Lingpa) states:

The Separation of Samsara and Nirvana (*Ru shan*) of the Body.

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First comes the separation related to the body; in a comfortable place, one takes the position of the *Vajra*, putting the soles of the feet together, straightening the back, and with the muscles of the legs tensed, one straightens the spinal column, as with the palms of the hands joined one lifts the arms above one's head. As far as the concentration is concerned,

one's gaze is directed into space, as one visualizes one's own body in space in the form of a golden *Vajra* with five points. One remains in this position as long as possible, according to one's own capacities; at the beginning for as long as it would take to eat a meal,

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then for as long as possible, committing oneself with diligence both day and night.

Through this visualization, the three principal channels¹¹⁰ the five *chakras*¹¹¹, etc., are (automatically) controlled, for which reason as the definitive realization of this practice one will obtain the *Vajra* Body. As far as the provisional (benefits) are concerned, it has the capacity to eliminate interruptions and is also one of the best methods of protection. Thus one remains for a long time in this position, but when one can no longer manage to maintain it, one lets out an (aspirated) HA and at the same time one imagines that one's own state of *Rig pa* manifests as a white A and that from the centre of the top of the head it transfers directly into space. In that instant one lies down and, as if one had fallen, one remains absolutely without tension like a corpse in a cemetery. (The mind, too) should be left in a relaxed state, without judgments or concepts.

Committing oneself to this practice for two or three days, etc., one will master

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the *ru shan* or separation related to the body, but more generally, one will perfect the separations of the body, voice and mind also. This is because with the *Vajra* position taken up with the body (one applies the *ru shan* of the body); with the fixation in space (in a condition) beyond concepts (one applies the *ru shan*) of the mind; with the letting out of the sound Ha by the voice (one applies the *ru shan* related to) the voice through the method of breathing.

This method is not the same as those generally described in the *rDzogs chen* Teachings. It is very profound, and by itself can allow the recognition of one's own state and the understanding of the true condition.

SAMAYA.

The second *Ru shan*: The Separation of Samsara and Nirvana of the Voice.

Seated in a comfortable place, one assumes the position of Vairocana that has seven characteristics, and directs one's gaze into space with one's eyes wide open (in such a way as to) obtain control of all one's external vision. In this condition one sounds HUM loudly and sharply, sounding HUM about twenty or thirty times with each single exhalation.

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One sounds the HUM perceiving the sound of it distinctly but with the awareness that its nature is Emptiness. (At the same time) one imagines that from one's heart a first letter HUM comes out followed continually by an infinite number of other HUMs until the space surrounding oneself becomes full of blue HUMs. All these HUMs come out expanding to fill to the very limits the whole of space and everything that exists in our mind, as we (at the same time) vigorously sound (the sound HUM). The HUMs then return close to us again and once again the surrounding space in which we find ourselves is filled with HUMs. Then we sound HUM again, all the HUMs enter one after another into our mouths, until the interior of our body is entirely filled with HUMs. Sounding HUM loudly again, one feels a sensation of one's body being full of intense heat and a



sensation of being rather uncomfortable. Then all the HUMs move from the top of our heads to the tips of our toes, left and right, front and back, in all the directions possible without leaving any empty space between them, until at a certain point the body is full of HUMs and is transported into the air by the force of the HUMs

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where it floats in space, as one still continues to pronounce the sound. When one feels tired in body and mind one pronounces the syllable PHAT loudly (exhaling completely), and at the same time and one observes what the condition of one's own mind is, and then one relaxes in that state, (in contemplation).

One trains oneself in this practice, too, for two or three days, according to one's possibilities. Training oneself in this way for a long period one will generally succeed in the separation of the body, the voice and the mind, this being a special method different from the others usually spoken of in *rDzogs chen*. It is very special, because keeping the body in the position of Vairocana known as the one with seven characteristics one trains with the sounds in such a way as to experience a living vibration which enables one to separate the body, while the voice too is purified by the sound of the HUM and the mind is purified with the *'phro 'du* (the expansion and re-absorption, sending out and bringing back). Applying this practice one realizes oneself, and one finds and discovers the nature of *gNas ba* (the state of calm) and *'Gyu ba* (the movement) of the mind. *SAMAYA*.

The third *ru shan*: the Separation of Samsara and Nirvana of the Mind

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Once again one assumes the position of Vairocana with seven characteristics, (then) at the centre of one's body one visualizes the nature of one's own mind in the form of a white A about the size of a thumb, clear and luminous, and from this white A rays of light shine out until every part of one's body is filled with the light of the A, in such a way that (in the end) the body is absolutely integrated with the light of the A. Thus one's body becomes a dimension of light, and from it light expands little by little, in the same way that (circles of water) expand one after another when one throws a stone into a calm lake, or in the same way that the *mandala* of (the colours) of a rainbow gradually appear. One imagines that the light expands, and then, once again in a gradual manner, the light returns towards oneself until it is re-absorbed into the centre of one's body as it was at the beginning. In that moment with this clarity present one sounds PHAT, an empty sound, and with this sound one instantly blocks all concepts of the visualization. One then remains relaxed in the manner previously explained.

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Then, successively, one applies the same visualization practice as before with the colours yellow, red, green, etc.

With this (method) one purifies the obstacles which hinder the mind, the five poisons, the five emotions. In fact, visualizing the white A one purifies mental obscuration; visualizing the light blue A one purifies anger; visualizing the yellow A one purifies pride; visualizing the red A one purifies attachment; visualizing the green A one purifies envy; thus one eliminates the seeds of the five emotions and of the passions which manifest spontaneously in the condition of Enlightenment as the five wisdoms. With this method, too, one succeeds in realizing the separation of the body, the voice and the mind: because the body is integrated with the white A and in this way one realizes the separation linked to the body; with the sound PHAT which divides the purity and the impurity of the channels one realizes the separation related to the voice; and with the

visualization of the expansion and re-absorption one realizes the separation related to the mind. This method, among all the other methods of *ru shan*, has a special benefit superior to all other methods of *Dzogchen*; just through applying this method by itself, one can discover the state of *Rig pa*, linked to Method and to *Prajna* (*Thabs* and *Sherab*).

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The soles of the feet are pressed together on the ground to control the two *pranas* (which govern the mobility of the limbs). Bringing the knees up to the chest coordinates the elements of the body. Keeping the spine straight regulates the functioning of the channels and the substances of the body. Putting the two hands together brings the integration of the state of *Rig pa* with the *dByings* (the essential dimension).

Through maintaining the neck straight the appearance of the lights (*sgron ma*) at the objective level is favoured.

Furthermore, realizing oneself in the majestic position of the *Dharmakaya*, which is like a lion, is the sign of having transcended sleep, and that the four demons have been transformed into the knowledge of the *dharmas*. Realizing oneself in the lying down position of the *Sambhogakaya* is the sign of having transcended action. Realizing oneself in the position with the knees raised (*tsog pu*) of the *Nirmanakaya* is the sign that it will not be necessary any more in the future to apply oneself to ascetic practices.

SAMAYA.

Thus the methods for applying the separation of body, voice and mind are clarified.

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When one practices the 'separation of the mind' spoken of above, it is stated that the body should remain in the position of *Vairocana* with the seven characteristics; this must probably refer to a position which has characteristics similar to that of the *Nirmanakaya* with the knees raised, whose various benefits are explained at the end of the quotation.

The text further adds:

'With the aim of developing the practice, if one has a cold condition of the body, one takes the *Nirmanakaya* position and one will develop heat. If one has a condition tending to excessive *bad kan* or phlegm, on the other hand, they will be eliminated with the *Dharmakaya* position. If the elements are balanced, one will realize oneself with the *Sambhogakaya* position.

Thus one can understand that one should adopt one of the three positions according to the situation. At the end of each of the explanations related to the separation of the body, the voice and the mind,

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we have found the word 'SAMAYA'. This is a warning to indicate that it is necessary to receive the transmission of these instructions from a Master, and one should consider them to be fundamental methods of the *Upadesa*. It is important to understand this principle.

Those who desire to apply the methods of the separation of body, voice and mind in a broader way can base themselves on the instructions for the preliminary practices that I have myself prepared, summarizing the essence of the root *Tantra* known as *The Sound that Surpasses Everything* (*sGra thal gyur*). In any event, the method described here, as Padmasambhava himself indicated calling it 'this supreme essence of my heart', is like the juice of the teachings of the great *Guru* of Oddiyana, easy to apply but extremely effective, because there is nothing of any great importance that is not included in it.

The Inner Separation: the Purification of the Six Lokas:

The inner separation involves the practice of the purification of the causes of the six Lokas or dimensions of *Samsara*, with regard to which one reads in the *Supreme Wisdom* (*Ye shes bla ma*):

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The inner separation is based on the *Tantra of Universal Clarity* (*Klong gsal*)¹¹², in which it is written:

"In the head, at the throat, at the heart, at the navel, at the base of the genitals, and on the soles of the feet there are to be found (respectively the syllables) A SU NRI TRI PRE DU".

In fact, from the moment in which our body was formed, as the fruit of karmic traces (*bag chags*), one can find present in it, in a stable manner, seeds capable of producing (a birth) among the six classes of beings. Here there accumulate the traces of previous actions, which later act as secondary causes for accumulating more of them. When one dies, therefore, one transmigrates in the (karmic dimension) corresponding to the *chakra* governed by its particular syllable, in which the mind and the (subtle) *prana* are re-absorbed. For this reason, now that we are on the path, this is the best way to purify (the causes of the six Lokas), the supreme teaching of the unsurpassable vehicle which contains many methods easy to apply. With regard to how to carry out the purification, it is written in the *Deje* ('*Das rje*):

"Since this body is produced by the cause of ignorance, it contains in it the seeds of the six classes of beings;

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since *Rig pa* is the true (dimension) of the three *kayas*, it manifests as the three letters of the three *kayas*: thus one trains with the letters and effects the separation."

As it is written, that which has to be purified is found in the form of a white A at the head, seed of the gods; a light green SU at the throat, seed of the semigods; a light blue NRI at the heart, seed of the humans; a dark red TRI at the navel, seed of the animals; a light grey PRE at the base of the genitals, seed of the *Pretas*; a brown DU (on each of the) soles of the feet, seed of the hell beings. The means for purification consists, on the other hand, of the three *vajras*, wisdom of the *rig pa* that is inseparable from (the state of) all Enlightened beings, whose nature manifests in the form of the (following) letters, the white OM at the head, the red A at the throat, and the blue HUM at the heart, which are luminous and sparkling. Reciting these three syllables, the rays which spread out from them purify the seeds of the six classes of beings, including the latent karmic traces, finally completely eliminating them.

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One thus recites OM A HUM one hundred thousand times for each seed to purify, adding a further cycle to so that one recites (the *mantra*) until one reaches a total of seven hundred thousand times. As a sign of having purified one's hindrances, ordinary attachment will diminish spontaneously. As is written in the *Universal Clarity* (*Klong gsal*):

"Those who carry out the inner separation empty the seeds of *Samsara* which cause illusion".

One should apply the inner separation in the above way. Or otherwise one can base oneself on the instructions relating to the method of the 'Purification of the six Lokas' which is used as a collective practice by the Dzogchen Community.

The Training of the *Sems 'dzin*.

It is written in *The All-Surpassing Sound Tantra* (*sGra thal 'gyur*):

"There are twenty one methods of training with the *Semdzin* (*sems 'dzin*), divided into three series of seven practices: through the first (series) one finds one's own natural state; through the second (series) one separates the body from the mind;

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through the third (series) one discovers the ultimate nature of phenomena (the condition of the *Dharmata*).

The practitioner relaxes body, voice and mind into their own true condition, and integrates the breathing. One tries to become expert in and apply the different methods; applying them, one breaks the conditioning of thoughts".

As we have read, there are twenty one *Semdzin* subdivided into three series: the first has as its aim the discovery of one's own natural state; the second, of separating the body and the mind; the third, of understanding the ultimate nature or the true condition of the phenomena of existence. One can train in all of these various methods and learn them gradually. But if that is not possible, and one cannot practice them all, it is sufficient to apply the more essential conclusion of the *Sems 'dzin* which is explained in *The Essence of the Wisdom of the good path* (*Ye shes snying po*), a text which contains a collection of instructions written by the master A'dzam 'Brugpa.

The *Sems 'dzin* using the symbol of the white A.

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The Essence of Wisdom (*Yes shes snying po*) states:

"In a silent place, with the body relaxed, remaining in the lotus position, one visualizes a luminous white A on the tip of one's nose or on the forehead. Breathing out through the nostrils, the white A goes away; breathing in, it returns to and stays where it was at the beginning. If (one suffers from disturbances due to an) excessively hot condition, one visualizes the breathing and the letter as if they were cold; if (the disturbances are caused by an) excessively cold nature, one visualizes them as if they were hot. Practising in this way, little by little one will acquire familiarity (with this method), and one repeats the fixation on the A for a cycle of eight or nine times always maintaining the presence of sending away and returning (of the A) without letting one's thoughts distract one and interrupt. The result of this practice is that one will find a state of *Zhi nas*, a state of relaxed calm).

Then, even without depending on the support of the A as a visualization, there will automatically arise an 'unborn' state of calm beyond any thought. And when one can find oneself in this state easily, not just once, but continually,

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this is the sign of the realization of the contemplation of the union of *Zhi nas* and *lHag mthong* (intuitive clarity)".

The training of the *Sems 'dzin* using the Syllable PHAT.

(From the same text):

"With the body relaxed and the mind calm one remains in one's own natural condition, and in this relaxed state one (suddenly) sounds a loud

PHAT. Sounding PHAT thus there will arise a state of consciousness entirely free from thoughts (*bad de ba*; pronounced: *bedewa*;) but with clarity: relax in this condition. Then as soon as another thought arises one sounds a loud PHAT as before which cuts it and blocks it; if one does not succeed in cutting off the thought in this way, one pronounces many loud and fierce, but short PHATs, repeating this many times. Practising in this way, a wisdom whose nature is beyond concepts will arise. But in this respect one must observe well whether it is the real wisdom or only a passing experience".

The Semdzin of the Laughter of the Wrathful Divinities.

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From the same text:

"As before, one stays in a calm and relaxed position. When one is relaxed, in the moment that any kind of thought arises whether it is good or bad, pleasing or displeasing, one pronounces 'HA, HA', in a short but vigorous (literally: fierce) manner: the thoughts are calmed and one thus remains relaxed in this calm state. Sometimes, after having pronounced the sound HA one can apply the empty holding (that is to say, one remains with lungs empty for a while after the exhalation), as if the body had been almost emptied inside. If one does not feel happy, if one does not feel oneself to be in a pleasurable condition, if the *prana* and the condition of the elements are disturbed, all such disturbances of this kind can be overcome through this method. Practising it there will arise the experience of the self-originated wisdom of the *Dharma*, the ultimate nature of phenomena".

The Semdzin of the Struggle of the Asuras.

From the same text:

"One goes to a high place like the peak of a mountain, and one relaxes body, voice and mind as in the preceding practices. First one slowly rotates the body and then the head, and then, rotating progressively more and more violently, one fixes one's concentration on a red RAM at the navel and holds one's breath as one rotates. For the whole period that one applies this practice one should eat foods that strengthen the Air (*rhung*) element. Practising in this way the external vision is blocked automatically

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and one will experience a condition of the total absence of solidity and the experience of Voidness beyond any thought".

The Sems 'dzin using RAM.

From the same text:

"One visualizes a red, very thin, letter RAM, at the forehead, alternating long periods of fixation with short ones. In this way, as an ordinary experience, the states of *Zhi nas* and *lHag mtong* will arise together at the same time".

The Semdzin of the Thoughts pursued by the HUM.

From the same text:

"One relaxes body and mind as before. One visualizes and fixes on a blue HUM on the tip of one's nose. When the concentration is stable one sounds or chants the HUM slowly and quietly in a low voice, visualizing that

the HUM goes away linked to the exhalation as with the *Sems 'dzin* with the A described above. In this way the sound of the HUM and the (visualized) HUM are integrated with the breathing. With the exhalation, the HUM goes away; and then one applies the empty holding for a little while, and one inhales and bringing the HUM back to oneself. One repeats this exercise seven or eight times, without allowing oneself to become distracted by one's thoughts".

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When thoughts no longer disturb the visualization, one sends the HUM even farther away, as far away as the eyes can see, and then, in one's imagination, even further away again beyond this limit. One trains oneself thus repeatedly, and at a certain moment the concept of the HUM one is visualizing will disappear, one will no longer have any idea of it whatsoever, and the voice will also stop sounding the HUM: one will find an insubstantial state of *Had de ba*. With the presence of clarity there arises a type of experience that is impossible to explain in words. When this experience arises not once but many times, it will be the sign of the complete realization of *Zhi nas* and *lHag mtong* linked to the support of the visualization of the letter".

The *Sems 'dzin* of the Song of the Vajra.

As is written in the *Union of the Sun and the Moon Tantra* (*Nyt zla kha sbyor*):

"Singing the Song of the *Vajra*,
one's mind is satisfied".

As it is said in the *Tantra*, it is fundamental for a practitioner to integrate all the possible experiences of the body, voice and mind

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in the non-dual sound (*gDangs*) (or sound vibration) of the Song of the *Vajra*. The condition of the state of *Rig pa*, the present moment, are integrated in the Song of the *Vajra* remaining relaxed in this state. This is one of the principal points of the practice.

It is necessary to train oneself well and familiarize oneself with these fundamental seven *Sems 'dzin*. Through this training one must obtain concrete experiences; but to have the experiences, one must try; to try is very important.

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The different Methods of working with one's Behaviour.

The different qualities of the Path of Renunciation of the *Sutras*, the Path of Transformation of the *Tantras*, and the *Atiyoga*, the Path of Self-Liberation, are reflected in the different ways each of the paths has of integrating the behaviour of the practitioner with his condition. Thus the variation in the ways of behaving comes about because the Paths themselves are distinctly different in their characteristics and in their essentials.

A practitioner who has entered into the path of *rDzog chen*, must in any event understand the true nature of these differences in the way of behaviour which are related to the various types of path; through this knowledge of their nature one must integrate everything, and thus one must find oneself in the state of behaviour of Samantabhadra of the *rDzogs pa chen po*. With regard to the *dKa 'thub*, which means ascetic behaviour, the various schools, Buddhist and otherwise, see this differently. Of the different Views and Ways of Behaving, some of them are based on ascetic practices involving self-sacrifice, and some of them are not; the same is also true for the way one practises in each of the paths, which can either require or not require purity, and so on.

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The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* (*The Necklace of Theoretical Views*) states:

"Depending on the differences in the *lta ba* (the View) (of the various paths), there are also different types of ascetic disciplines and different ways of practising.

The paths that do not adhere to ascetic disciplines are those of the '*jig rten Phyal pas* (or *Chalwas*), and the *Mur thug pas*. These are two ancient Hindu traditions.

There are four traditions, on the other hand, which do apply ascetic disciplines:

1) the *rGyang 'phren pas*, and 2) the *Mu steg pas*, who adhere to mundane ascetic disciplines;

and 3) the *Nyan thos* (the *Sravakas*, or Listeners), and 4) the *Bodhisattvas*, who adhere to higher or supra-mundane ascetic disciplines.

The *Phyal pas* do not practice ascetic disciplines because they are ignorant of the principle of cause and effect. The *Mur thug pas*, too, do not adhere to ascetic disciplines, since according to their way of seeing (*chad par lta ba*) there is nothing after death. The *rGyang 'phen pas*, who are interested in particular benefits, use practices of purification and rituals, and

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thus one can say that they do practise ascetic disciplines.

Since the *Mu steg pas* believe in the existence of an (eternal) 'I' or immortal Self, in order to purify it they submit the body to ascetic disciplines and use practices such as, for example, the Five Fires, which they are thus applying as a means for the realization of a mistaken path.

With regard to the ascetic disciplines of the Listeners (or *Sravakas*), the *Vianaya* states:

'Do not create any obstacles (negative actions),
but enjoy all the virtues (positive actions) in a perfect way.

Thus one can conquer one's own mind.

This is the Teaching of the Buddha.'

It is therefore held that there exist virtuous and non virtuous actions, virtue and vice, and that all the *dharmas* (or phenomena) of the relative and the absolute condition exist distinct (from one another); for this reason, in the

Hinayana, it is held that one should enjoy the application of virtue, and renounce or abandon non-virtuous actions, and one accordingly applies ascetic disciplines following the path in this way.

The ascetic disciplines of the *Bodhisattva*.

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In 'The *Bodhisattva's Vow*' (*Byang chub sems dpai' sdom pa*) one reads:

"Even if (it is said) one should not apply the meaning to secondary causes, or make the 'threat' of a miracle, if one has a good intention, because of one's compassion and mercy, nothing one does will be a hindrance (or a negative action)".

As has been said, if one is guided by great compassion, all '*dharmas*' become virtuous (positive); and even if an action may seem apparently non-virtuous, in reality it does not break one's vow, because the vow of the *Bodhisattva* is based on great compassion.

The supreme ascetic discipline.

*The Sutra of the Great Promise*¹¹³ (*Dam tshig chen po't mdo*) states:

"If one understands that even the enjoyments of the five passions are the vehicle of the Buddha (the path of the Enlightened One), then even applying the passions one remains (pure) like a lotus flower that grows (undefiled) in the mud; if one has this understanding, one knows that all the accumulations of moral qualities, all the passions, and (in fact) all *dharmas* (phenomena), have from the beginning the same (fundamental) nature, the same principle.

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For this reason compassion is not something on which to depend or to be maintained; and anger is not something to be given up. However, if one does not have this knowledge, it does not mean that this potentiality is lacking (because all *dharmas* in their essential nature are equal from the beginning).

According to one's View, one implies from the beginning the existence of the movement of thought, or the condition beyond thought; on the basis of this knowledge, one follows the path applying ascetic discipline in a pure or impure manner".

Thus this is clarified.

With regard to the meaning of the term *dKa' thub*, ascetic sacrifice and *brTul zbugs* (*brTul* means conquering a mistaken or negative way of seeing; *zbugs* means entering into the correct path; the real meaning of *brTul zbugs* is therefore a way of applying the path correctly). Rongzom's Commentary explains:

"*dKa' thub* is derived from the term *Thapasa* (Sanskrit: *tapas*), which links ascetic discipline to the fruit of the qualities, so that applying ascetic disciplines to the body is therefore the (essential) characteristic of the Way of Behaving.

brTul zbugs, (on the other hand) from the Sanskrit term *vrata*, meaning 'to change', with the aim of attaining the fruit of the qualities, means to modify

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the previous condition into something else; (and in this case), this is considered to be the characteristic of the Way of Behaving".

Thus it is explained clearly.

With regard to the ascetic discipline of the Five Fires, Rongzom's Commentary states:

"Some clairvoyants who had the gift of worldly foreknowledge, did not succeed in determining that the person examined by them had a precise cause to be reborn as a god. They noticed only that the person in question, because of the cold, lit four fires and sat in the centre of them. When this person died, the clairvoyants, thanks to their paranormal powers, succeeded in seeing that he had been reborn among the gods, but thinking that this rebirth was due to the fact of having lit five fires, they concluded that the lighting of five fires (four, plus the sun), was a cause of rebirth among the gods.

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Believing that this (rebirth as a god) was the result of ascetic discipline carried out with the heat of fire, using four fires and the heat of the sun, they practised this kind of ascetic discipline, which then became known as 'the Five Fires'."

With regard to the *brTul zbugs* (the way of applying the Path correctly) and the opposite (*log par spyod pa*) way of following the Path, Rongzom's Commentary explains:

"There are also ascetic disciplines found among the Buddhist traditions that are undertaken to cause bodily suffering. In fact, it is said: 'Sacrificing the body one obtains the three types of fruit'. This is said in order to eliminate the principle of meaningless sacrifice."

With regards to the quotation from the *Sutra*¹¹⁴ of the *Vinaya*, Rongzom states:

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"Not creating any obstacles (negative actions) means training oneself in morality. To liberate oneself from the ten very heavy non-virtuous actions - taking the life of others, taking things that are not given, sexual misconduct, lying, committing negative actions with body, voice and mind, all actions which make one lose the opportunity for liberation - it is necessary to train oneself in morality and accumulate virtue; this involves equally training oneself in *Prajna*, and in understanding in a correct way the meaning of the Four Noble Truths, which permit one to enter into the path of the *Bodhisattva* and to obtain the fruit of this Path;

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controlling one's own mind or re-educating one's own mind, involves training in *Samadhi*, the overcoming of the ordinary mind; in general the mind of ordinary beings is attracted by the conditions of the five sense enjoyments¹¹⁵; for this reason

they always base themselves on the objects of the passions and the emotions. Superior beings, such as the *Bodhisattvas*, have the power of *Samadhi*, of contemplation, the capacity of equanimity, which is the opposite of the incorrect condition, the contemplation which leads to the correct and pure level.

When it is said that: 'This is the Teaching of the Buddha', this serves to

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indicate that this is something authentic, in which all can believe and not like the words of a worldly *Ishvara*; this is the authentic Teaching of the Buddha, the sacred *Dharma*, the *Vinaya*, the authentic Teaching of the Buddha on the correct way to follow the path.

Through the power of this, all virtuous and non-virtuous, relative and absolute *dharmas*, appear distinctly; this is the meaning".

Thus it is explained.

The Commentary then continues:

"Appear distinctly" means that both at the absolute and the relative level they are defined as existing, because they are confirmed by logic. All that one sees, all that one understands, all the *dharmas* which appear in relative consciousness are also present in absolute consciousness.

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Both of them exist for this reason: this is the meaning. One does not add the word 'truth' because this (is another) concept, (which) is an obstacle to the truth. In fact, if one were to say that relative truth exists one would contradict the absolute truth, and vice versa. For this reason here one does not speak of truth, but only of the distinct existence of the absolute and relative dimensions; this is the way of seeing, the View".

Thus the quotation is clarified.

The meaning of the quotation taken from the *sDom pa Nyi shupa*¹¹⁶ too, which says 'One does not apply the meaning according to the cause' (in para 307 above) is explained by Rongzom's Commentary:

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"To liberate all sentient beings from the ocean of *Samsara*, one should cultivate the intention (to develop) the wisdom of omniscience. But one cannot carry out this commitment to benefit all sentient beings until one has reached this realization of omniscient wisdom. If one does attain this, the cause is the *Bodhicitta*, which is linked with the cause of great compassion and whose root is compassion itself. To reach this goal one applies effective methods. These three aspects must not be lacking.

Contrary to these, are the four types of hindrance to becoming a *Bodhisattva*, which are considered to be heavy in nature:

The opposite of maintaining the *Bodhicitta* is losing the *Bodhicitta*.

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The opposite of great compassion is not to help, not to offer salvation to sentient beings through greed, and disturbing others with a bad intention. The opposite of the effective methods for reaching the goal is renouncing the sacred *Dharma*, losing the *Bodhicitta*, acting with greed, and disturbing others; these four are considered the occasions for the loss of the vocation of the *Bodhisattva*.

If one does not have these obstacles, but is rooted stably in compassion, if one has compassion and is guided by it, one applies the actions of one's body, voice and mind to help beings as is necessary. For this reason one speaks of 'not conquering according to the causes'.

The *Bodhisattva*, according to the secondary causes, conquers certain beings in order to benefit others.

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But if on the other hand one does not carry out this action of conquering, the *Bodhisattva* can lose this opportunity.

In the same way, it is said: 'Don't carry out the threat of a miracle'.

This means that through a miracle one can bring beings onto the path in an abusive way (through fear) of rebirth and a threat; in general these are not considered sacred actions. If however the possibility to conquer or to bring beings onto the path exists and one does not act, one as a consequence loses the opportunity. (Losing can also mean losing one's vow of *Bodhicitta*, losing the opportunity to benefit others). These are explanations and examples to make one understand what the incorrect way of behaving is. Those who have compassion, a good intention and mercy, do not encounter obstacles. This indicates the correct behaviour of individuals whose mind is guided by

compassion and mercy. If the intention is good and virtuous, even if the action seems to have an opposite or cruel aim, this does not result in the loss of one's vow and will not create obstacles".

To explain the meaning of the supreme secret sacrifice.

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The Commentary to the *Sutra of the Great Promise* states:

"If one understands that this is the vehicle of the Buddha means that one has a mind which is capable of understanding deeply the real meaning of Method and *Prajna*; if one understands deeply the meaning of equality, even if one accepts the five passions and the five enjoyments one remains without fault like a lotus flower in the mud, and one enters into action without accumulating negativity; this is the meaning.

The Vow of the *Vinaya* states:

'A negative action very heavy in nature (*Pham pa*), can be transformed into a negative action that is less negative (*sBam po*)'.

In the *Sutra of the Bodhisattva* it is explained:

'When an intention is governed by compassion, even if its application seems hard and cruel, there is no negativity, and furthermore it keeps one's vow perfectly'.

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In this case too, if the mind is guided by equality (the real condition of the *Dharmadhatu* in which good and bad are equal), any action undertaken is not stained by defects.

Contrary to the morality of the *Hinayana*, in the vow of the *Bodhisattva* all is perfected. If one is guided by the state of equality of all *dharmas* there is no contradiction; this is the real meaning.

In conclusion, the vow of the *Hinayana* involves not disturbing others; the vow of the *Bodhisattva* is beyond the principle of not disturbing others and involves entering into action to bring about their benefit; the vow of the *Tantras*, though it includes the principle of not disturbing others and implies entering into action to benefit them,

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is like the action of the *Tathagatas*, of the realized beings. Thus one applies the practice.

Furthermore, in the *Hinayana* vow the concrete action and the intention are both considered important; in the vow of the *Bodhisattva*, compassion is the principle aspect while in the vow of the *Tantras*, it is *Prajna* that is essential.

In the *Hinayana* one follows the example of the *Arhats* of the past, on the path of the *Bodhisattvas* one follows the example of the *Bodhisattvas* of the high *Bhumis*; in the *Tantras* one follow all the *Tathagatas*".

Thus the meaning is clarified; and the *Sutra* further adds:

"Even if all is pure from the beginning,
the condition of thought
and the condition beyond thought
(nevertheless) do exist;
in the same way,
the practice of ascetic discipline (*dKa' thub*)
and *brTul zhugs* (the way of applying the path correctly)
enjoy the (pure) vision and the impure one".

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The Commentary explains:

"Those who in their conduct apply the *Samaya* of the principle of *Tantra* according to which 'all is equal' believe that in every circumstance there is nothing which is not pure.

Whatever appears is considered pure from the beginning and therefore both ascetic discipline and the correct application of the Path (*brTul zhug*) are enjoyed at the pure level.

The meaning of the principle of *Tantra* - according to which all is pure and equal - and of its *samaya* - is therefore expressed by these words; they enable one to understand that whoever does not have a pure way of seeing practices ascetic disciplines and the path in a gradual and impure manner; and even if this is not expressed clearly one can nevertheless understand it".

Thus it is clarified.

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What is the Way of Behaving characteristic of *rDzogs chen*?

The *Kun byed rgyal po Tantra* states:

"In the unborn primordial state
all concepts of virtue and vice,
accepting and rejecting, large and small,
pure and impure, are of the same principle.

The real meaning is beyond the duality
of accepting and rejecting, pure and impure,
using and not using, applying and not applying,
and beyond any concept of centre and boundaries.

The unborn *Bodhicitta* is the base of everything.

Every attitude one might apply would not be in contradiction;

doing and not doing are both unborn since the beginning;

whatever attitude one applies

remains in the sphere of the unborn.

In the application of the state of the *Kun byed rGyal po*

there does not exist anything to measure or to limit in quantity, since it is like the sky,

it is beyond limits of being and non-being; it is non-dual.

This is the *Bodhicitta* behaviour of the *Kun byed rGyal po*,

the behaviour of the mind of the five enjoyments

(the five enjoyments are also part of the behaviour of the nature of *Bodhicitta*).

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Anger, attachment, and all the passions¹¹⁷

are part of the behaviour of the *Bodhicitta* or primordial state, as are the five ornamental causes¹¹⁸ (the five elements),

the three existences and the three worlds.

I, the forefather of all Enlightenment,

have never explained a way of behaving

which is without knowledge of the unborn state".

With this one can understand the meaning.

The way in which one realizes the fruit.

The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"The final arrival point of the *rDzogs pa Chen po*

is to enter into the self-perfected state
of the Great Accumulation of the *Chakra* of the letters
(*Yige 'khor lo tshogs chen*).

Persons of a superior capacity, understanding themselves
to be enlightened from the beginning,
are closer to this meaning.

However this is not suitable for ordinary persons".

The meaning of 'the final arrival point of the *rDzogs pa chen po*' is that the final
arrival point of all the Vehicles, from the *Hinayana* to the *Atiyoga* is exactly this.

Chapter Eight

The way in which one realizes the fruit

The level of realization called the 'Great Accumulation of the *Chakra* of the Letters' is explained in the Commentary by Rongzom:

"This *Bhumi* of the Great Accumulation of the *Chakra* of the Letters at the level of total Enlightenment is known by different names in different texts. In the *Sutras*, the Analytical vehicle (vehicle of the Characteristic), the level of total Enlightenment is known as *kun tu 'od*, total light; that is to say, from the infinite light manifested by the divinity, beings receive a probability (of their own Enlightenment).

Thus it is explained in the *Sutras*. In the *Tantras*, as regards the level of total Enlightenment, three states are spoken of: *kun tu 'od*, the state of total light; *padma chan*, the state of the lotus; and the state of the Great Accumulation of the *Chakra* of the Letters. With regard to the state of total light it

is stated that the dimension of the *Dharmakaya* is Enlightened in its own nature, beyond the material condition, and that it thus pervades every dimension. 325

With regard to the State of the Lotus, it is said that in the *Dharmakaya* there does not exist anything to discover through *Prajna*, since it is beyond concepts; this is the basis of the potentiality beyond any attachment.

In the state of the Great Accumulation of the *Chakra* of the Letters, self-perfected wisdom and the *mandala* of concrete phenomena manifest without effort. The letter has two aspects: the wisdom and the concrete manifestation; the concrete manifestation is divided into name and form. Form in turn is divided into completely perfected vision and partially perfected vision. This kind of fruit represents the great accumulation of the *mandala* of all the *dharmas*.

Everything is perfected in the state of the self liberation of the *Chakra* of the Letters, and since this is so it comes to be called 'The State of the Great Accumulation' or the thirteenth *Bhumi* of total Enlightenment. 326

The *rDorje sNying po rgyan Tantra*¹¹⁹ states that there are twelve *Bhumis* of total Enlightenment: Method, *Prajna*, the five dimensions¹²⁰, and the five wisdoms. The supreme *Bhumi* is at the level of the State which holds knowledge (*Rig pa 'dzin*); it is also called the *Bhumi* of the Vajradhara, *Bhumi* of Samantabhadra without distinctions, or the *Bhumi* of supreme wisdom. These different definitions are aimed at underlining the qualities of superiority of the supreme *Bhumi* in its various aspects.

The *Nyid 'od* states: 327

"In the Commentary by Rongzom it is explained that the wisdom is the (actual) concrete letter.

In the *Phyogs bcu mun sel*¹²¹, a commentary to the *gSangba snyingpo*, one reads:

'It is called the Great Accumulation of the *Chakra* of the Letters because the letters of the miraculous emanation and the those of the symbol spread out like clouds to spread the Teaching'.

The *gTsang Hk*¹²² (another commentary on the *gSangba snyingpo*) states:

'The letter represents the name, the words, all *dharmas*. Even if the nature is not concrete, in the vision appear both the dimension of the body and that of

wisdom. So the wheel of the Great Accumulation of merit and wisdom is perfected from the beginning and has this quality'.

The *Dri med 'od*¹²³ (written by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Rinpoche), contains a very interesting explanation of the realization of the *Chakra* of the Letters: 'The meaning of the letter comes from the Sanskrit *akshara* which means immutable'.

The *Tantra* of Manjushri¹²⁴ states that it is the 'pure and supreme letter'

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This phrase is explained in the above mentioned Commentary:

"It is pure, supreme, immutable, beyond change;
it is the Great Accumulation of the *Chakra*
of the immutable *mandala*. This is the meaning."

(The term 'letter' is not translated in the correct manner; *akshara* in Sanskrit can mean both letter and immutable; in this case referring to realization, it means an immutable condition, and not 'letter'. These comments will help to clarify its meaning).

The base of wisdom and of the infinite concrete manifestations is the potentiality which manifests through the *ritsal*, sound, and lights, and rays.

Since sound is the manifestation of a letter, it is possible that this gave rise to this realization being defined in terms of letters; it is also possible that the term *akshara* can be interpreted as immutable; for this reason it is called immutable realization, state of the great perfection of the immutable wheel (*chakra*).

The reason for secrecy

This is a vehicle to be kept secret with the aim of being able to realize it.

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In clarification of this last principle The *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba* states:

"It is difficult for ordinary people - who have ways of feeling and thinking that are different - to believe that it is a matter of a vehicle as truly profound as it really is. Not understanding the profundity of it, they compare it to their own experience, maintaining that they can contest the truth of it, and they develop in this way a vision that is contrary to that of the supreme Masters. for this reason it must be kept secret, and for this reason also it is called 'The Secret Vehicle'".

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Chapter Nine

Chöd: The method linked to the whole of the Sutras and the Tantras

The meaning of the Complete Relation (the term is found in one of the four verses of *Santi Maha Sangha*)

The Teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni, the 'Totally Perfected One', includes the series of teachings of the *Sutras* and the *Tantras*; linked to all these teachings is the teaching known as *gCod*, a particular and profound path for overcoming demons, produced from the experiences of the lady Master Ma gcig lab sgron. Just as the great Masters of past times - including those who understood the *Atiyoga* teaching to its depths - have applied this Teaching of *gCod* in relation to the behaviour in *rDzogs chen*, so too it must have a fundamental place in relation to the principle of the *Santi Maha Sangha* teaching and be integrated with it. How should one establish the View of the Teaching of the *gCod*? The text *bKa' tshoms chen mo* (written by the lady Master Ma gcig lab sgron) states:

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"The root of demons is one's own mind;
the whole objective dimension manifests
in the energy of the state of *Rig pa*;
when this manifests, we develop attachment
and thus we become dominated by demons.
The mind perceives vision as an object,
and thus we are conditioned.

There are four types of demons:

the demon which blocks, related to the external world;
the demon which does not block, linked to the mind, internally;
the demon of pleasure, based on sensation;
and the demon of pride.

All these demons are concentrated in the demon of the ego. The root of these four demons which must be cut through is the ego."

Thus it is explained.

In the text it is further stated that there exist various types of **demons which block**:

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"When something appears to the organs of our senses, accepting or rejecting it we enter into judgment
and thus we block; this is called 'the demon that blocks'. Maintaining this concept
we are conditioned and transmigrate in Samsara.
Since form is empty, one should not be attached to form,
but meditate on Emptiness.
Not having attachment to form, one liberates oneself
from the demon of eternalism
(believing in the permanence of phenomena).
Meditating on Voidness,
one liberates oneself from the demon of nihilism.
One cannot deny that form manifests;
but this doesn't mean that there exists something
that must necessarily be confirmed or accepted:
what manifests is just (as insubstantial as) a vision of light (appearing to the mind);

sound, smell, taste, touch, sight, and mind
can all self-liberate in the same way.
The mind is the demon that does not block.
The demons that block arise from the organs of the senses;
all that appears in front of one's sense organs
self-liberates directly in the inseparable state of self-liberation,
transforming ignorance into the total state".

Thus the demons which block, related to the five senses, and the method for
eliminating them, are defined.
The text says again:

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"How does the demon which blocks arise?
The mind analyses
and judges all that appears to it as good or bad:
this is what is called the demon that does not block.
The truth is that everything that comes from the mind,
all the movements of the mind,
all positive or negative concepts of divinities and spirits,
hope and fear, create demons for ourselves.
If one understands that one's own condition
is the space of the dimension of the *Dharmadhatu*
- the condition of the *dharmas* -
in which whatever manifests, thoughts, memories, and so on,
is like the great waves and currents
that arise from the motionlessness of a calm ocean,
and if without changing or modifying anything,
without considerations of anything being either good or bad, one remains in
this condition,
then one liberates into the real state.
The condition of all phenomena, the *Dharmata*,
arises automatically from one's own state.

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It is not necessary to negate, affirm, or produce anything at all. The mind is
self-originated".

Thus is explained the way in which the demon which does not block
manifests, and how it must be eliminated.

"The demons of pleasure (*dga' brod*), which manifest as common and
supreme demons, arise from the illusion of the mind.
If one is in a sacred place, or a frightening place, and one is not disturbed by
spirits, but one feels important because of this, this type of pride is called the
'demon of the *dga' brod*'; if the signs of empowerment arise, if one obtains
merits, if one receives offerings and so on, all these become demons of
distraction; even all the manifestations which gain one fame, friends, enemies,
and happiness can become demons. If one manifests pride when divinities or
spirits bring attainments, or when one is surrounded by dependents, by
children, relatives, friends and situations which make one happy, these
become demons of the *dga' brod*.

Whatever manifestation there may be, one should not remain caught up in the
dualistic concept of subject and object, and without considering the quality
that arises to be anything in particular

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one applies the way of behaving without attachment like watching something
in a dream; understanding that these manifestations are like an ornament, just
like the ornaments put on by a beautiful woman which make her more
beautiful, one should not feel pride about things. If pride arises, this will

become the cause of transmigrating in the six *Lokas*, being the cause with which problems linked to attachment are created. To remain in one's own state beyond concepts applying the way of behaving, this is the supreme way of behaving. This principle is maintained secret and hidden by persons who have capacity and knowledge".

Thus the demons of the *dga' brod* and the way in which they must be eliminated is explained.

"The demons of ego, called the supreme demons, are divided into those of the path and those of the fruit and are:
the demon of the pride of the view beyond concepts,
the demon of the pride of the meditation of the non-dual state, the demon of the pride of the behaviour beyond thought,
and the demon of the pride of the path of the practice.

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When these are applied to the object they are not a means of the Path, but they become the actions of demons. With regard to the View and the Meditation (application), little can be shown through symbols, and there is nothing that should be concretized in the mind. When the manifestations appear without interruption, without considering them to be a View, one enters into the state beyond limits in which all that arises is at the same level. The supreme value of the *gCod* is that there is nothing to consider as an object. Since everything is *Bodhicitta* - the self-originated mind - there is nothing on which a practitioner has to meditate. Thus all the manifestations that have arisen from one's own sensations relax into their own state in a natural way; there is nothing to change or modify with regard to the meaning: one leaves it as it is, manifesting clarity in one's own self-liberated dimension, like butter mixed with butter. The meditation that does not meditate is the supreme meditation. In the Way of Behaving of (the path of) self-liberation nothing has to be applied in any particular way.

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Nothing has to be obtained through antidotes, since all the conditions arise from the same principle. Even the demons are self-originated by the same principle; nothing has to be negated, everything self-liberates in its own state. Knowledge is very powerful; therefore nothing has to be negated in one's own behaviour. One cannot apply this way of behaving if one does not have knowledge.

(This does not refer to any way of behaving at all, but to the practice and the way of behaving linked to the *gCod*, to the way of establishing contact with the spirits, making offerings, etc.)

The method for subduing our thoughts is the possession of capacity, the sacred empowerment of knowledge. When one receives the empowerment, real knowledge arises gradually".

Thus is explained the demon of pride and the way in which it can be eliminated, and the meaning of the way of behaving and the way in which it must be learned and applied.

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There are different ways of applying **the method of the *gCod***; if one is interested one can apply the system of the practice in a longer form, such as is explained in the text of the *gCod* called *The Laughter of the Dakinis*. If one is not able to do this, one should practise according to the method adopted by the Community. To practise the *Guru Yoga* in order to receive the empowerment is fundamental to the practice of the *gCod*; with the *Lus sByin*, the offering of the body, one invites the four categories of guests, the higher and precious guests, the powerful Guardians, the guests to whom one must repay debts and who provoke or create interruptions, and the guests of

compassion, the beings of the six *Lokas*¹²⁵. To satisfy all these guests one offers one's own body with a *Ganachakra*, transforming and offering them together with the Teaching. At the end one integrates the three components of the offering¹²⁶ (the one who offers, the one who receives, and the offering itself) into the state of the *rDzogs chen po* without solidifying anything at all with one's thoughts.

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If one is not capable of using this method, with the sound PHAT (which represents the method of *Thabs* and *Sherab*), one transfers one's own consciousness into space, and manifests oneself as a wrathful *Dakini*. Sounding PHAT again, one invites all the guests, and with a third PHAT one visualizes infinite offerings which, through the words OM A HUM HA HO HRI, transform infinitely purifying themselves and changing themselves as necessary. This is the principle, the essence of the practice of the *gCod*. It is important to follow its meaning, its principle, and not just the words. It is particularly important in this degenerate era.

Chapter Ten

The meaning of Yantra Yoga.

Just as butter is the essence of milk, the essence of all the Buddhist teachings, of the *sutras* and the *Tantras*, and also of the method of the *Chod*, is the *gyud* (*Tantras*), *lung* and *mennag* (*Upadesa*) of *rDzogs chen*. 340

To really integrate the knowledge of the natural condition of the three existences of the body, voice and mind of the individual, the practice of the system of *Yantra Yoga* (*Yoga of Movement*) (*Phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor*) is used. As is explained in the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*, the Union of the Sun and the Moon, it is necessary to learn correctly and gradually and to practise the methods of breathing and the movements as they are explained in the original text.

The nine exhalations of impure breath

The *Nyi zla kha sbyor* states:

"With the body in the position of Vairocana, one first of all practises the breathing of purification through the nine breathings".

That is to say one assumes the position of Vairocana with seven characteristics, and one exhales the impure air nine times.

When one does this, one visualizes as one inhales that the essence of the five elements of the universe in the form of lights of five colours enters slowly into one's body, 341

in such a way as to reinforce the condition of the five elements of one's own body. As one then exhales the impure air, one visualizes that all the hindrances accumulated in past lives and all possible illnesses, provocations of energy (*gdon*) and negativities come out in the form of a black substance (like smoke). This exercise which links the breathing to visualization is not only carried out at the beginning of a session of *Yantra Yoga* but is an important method to be applied before any type of practice that one applies in one's daily life.

The Training of the Body.

After having correctly carried out the expulsion of the impure breath, as preliminary exercises before applying the (various) series of *Yantra* it is indispensable to carry out the physical training which is made up of three methods:

- 1) the loosening for the joints or *Tshigs sbyong*;
- 2) the purification of the *prana* or *rLung bsang*;
- and 3) the control of the channels or *rTsa 'dul*.

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Tshigs sbyong, The Loosening of the Joints.

The *Nyi Zla kha sbyor* states:

"The preliminary practice concerns the training of the body, the limbs and the five organs of the senses".

There are five movements to loosen the joints:

- 1 - contracting (*sGrim pa*)
- 2 - shaking (*gSil ba*)
- 3 - pushing (*Phul ba*)

- 4 - flexing (*'Bebs pa*)
- 5 - rotating (*bsKor ba*)

Through these movements the limbs and the joints that have difficulty in moving are loosened and this helps one enter into the practice of the *Yantra*. As a further benefit, these five movements also help one to overcome all the problems and illnesses relating to the five organs of the senses, the limbs, and the greater and lesser articulated joints, so practising them brings great benefit.

***rLung bsang*, the Purification of the *Prana*.**

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After having prepared the body for movement with the five loosening exercises for the joints, one should train in the eight movements for the purification of the *prana*, which are linked respectively to eight different types of breathing.

- 1 - slow inhalation
- 2 - open hold
- 3 - holding forced downward
- 4 - rapid exhalation
- 5 - rapid inhalation
- 6 - closed hold
- 7 - contraction (holding pulled towards the back)
- 8 - slow exhalation

Practising these eight movements linked to the eight types of breathing in a correct manner, one tries to train oneself to become expert in these fundamental principles of the breathing and purification, to prepare oneself to subsequently apply the various methods related to the practice of the *prana*.

The Control of the Channels.

The *Nyt Zla kha sbyor* states:

"The practice of the *rTsa 'dul*, the control of the channels: keeping the back straight, from the right nostril one exhales the air in a rough manner, through the left nostril one inhales slowly and calmly, one holds the neutral (air) until it pervades the whole body.

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After having applied the practice of the *prana* one proceeds with the five movements of the *rTsa 'dul* which are:

- 1 - massaging (*mnye be*)
- 2 - stretching the ankles (*long shad*)
- 3 - rotating the arms (*dpung skor*)
- 4 - closing the armpits (*mchan 'bebs*)
- 5 - stretching oneself (*rmyong ba*)

If one trains well in these five movements, disturbances relating to the channels, *chakras* and the *prana* are eliminated and one becomes enabled to apply the method of the *rTsa lung*, (practices of the channels and the *prana*, involving visualization and holding of the breath), a profound method that brings great benefit. For this reason it is necessary to make this practice very concrete.

The fundamental practice: the five series of methods of breathing and the five series of *Yantras*

The *Nyt Zla kha sbyor* describes the five principal methods for the practice of the *prana*:

- 1 - the practice of *prana* of the four characteristic conditions¹²⁷
- 2 - the practice of *prana* of the four applications¹²⁸ (that is to say the rhythmic breathing)
- 3 - the practice of *prana* to trap the secret *prana* in the central hannel¹²⁹
- 4 - the practice of *prana* with the seven attributes¹³⁰
- 5 - the practice of *prana* with the six applications¹³¹

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Each of these contains particular methods of breathing that must be learned in a correct manner and then applied.

The *Nyt Zla kha sbyor* states in this respect:

"The root of the *Yantra* (*Phul Khor*) is the *prana*, the breathing: that is to say, open holding, forced holding, closed holding, contraction, holding empty, calm breathing, and rough breathing; one applies these seven combinations to the *Yantra* of the five series".

Thus one must learn the five methods of *prana*, and the five series of *Yantra*, each with the respective variations of position and movement which in turn enable one to further deepen the practice: after having learned them all a practitioner can apply the positions, breathings and movements that are most suited to him.

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One can choose the breathings linked to the five movements which are the most convenient and possible for one's condition, and apply them in one's daily life, thus practising a personalized session of *Yantra*. In this way one can reach the aim of the real meaning of the practice of the *rTsa lung* which guarantees the health and is very useful in life.

There are seven *Yantra* known as 'the seven positions of the lotus':

- 1 - the flaming lotus (*padma 'bar ba*)
- 2 - the curved lotus (*padma dgyild pa*)
- 3 - the twisted lotus (*padma 'kbil ba*)
- 4 - the suspended lotus (*padma lding ba*)
- 5 - the swinging lotus (*padma 'phril ba*)
- 6 - the leaping lotus (*padma 'hebs pa*)
- 7 - the snaking lotus (*padma 'khyugs pa*)

Through these positions the practitioner can really acquire the signs of the *prana* such as the development of heat and the sensation of bliss, etc.; one can also obtain control of the five elements, and the activation of the functioning of the channels, of the *prana* and of the *kundalini* energy (seed essence or *thig le*).

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The powers and the functions that derive from them bring the benefits of the qualities.

After having practised the five principal movements and the five practices of *prana* with the movements of *Yantra Yoga*, one concludes with the movements of the Wave of the *Vajra*, to overcome all obstacles.

The *Nyt Zla kha sbyor* states:

"The essence, the final arrival point of this Teaching is to apply oneself to enter into the self-perfected state. The practitioner must integrate and find himself in the state of *rDzogs chen* through the base, the path, and the fruit; he must learn to follow its profound meaning. Every practitioner

who desires to follow the *rDzogs chen* Teaching must first of all apply the practice which is the basis of the Path.

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Chapter Eleven

The initial and concluding phases of a session of practice: the three sacred fundamentals

To apply oneself to enter in the correct way into any practice, one begins with the nine purification breathings; afterwards, to enter into the pure dimension, one uses as in the *rDzogs chen Klong sde* the preliminary practice of the empowerment of the Master called the Purification of the Ocean. One purifies with the *mantra* of the five elements and with the visualization.

Then one continues with the principal practice, with the Refuge and commitment to the *Bodhicitta*, always governed with contemplation. And lastly one dedicates the merits and the virtues for the benefit of all beings, with the following words:

*"dge ba 'di yis myur du bdag
rtsa gsum lha tshogs 'grub gyur nas
'gro ba gcig kyang ma lus pa
de dag sa la 'god par shog".*

"Through these merits may I attain the
realization of the Three Roots
(and guide all beings on the path,
without anyone remaining excluded!)"

At the end of a session of teachings it would be suitable to recite instead, as a dedication and invocation, these verses by Nagarjuna:

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*"dge ba 'di yis skye bo kun
bsod nams ye shes tshogs rdzogs shing
bsod nams ye shes las byung ba'i
dam pa sku gnyis thob par shog".*

With these merits may all beings,
through the accumulation of merit and wisdom,
obtain the two dimensions of the Body, the *Dharmakaya* (the pure
dimension of all phenomena), and the *Rupakaya* (the dimension of
form).

At the end one uses the words of the *Mahaguru Padmasambhava*:

*"rGyal ba kun gyi gsang chen mdzod
bia med rDzogs chen bstan pa ni
Ji ltar mkha' la nyi shar bzhin
rgyal khams yongs la dar rgyas shog"*

"Just as the sun rises in the sky,
so, too, may the unsurpassable *Dzogchen* teaching,
secret treasure of all the Enlightened Ones,
arise and spread in all regions".

This is an invocation to cause the Teaching to spread in the dimensions of all beings. The initial virtuous action is the application of the Refuge and the *Bodhicitta*; the middle virtuous action is governing one's practice with contemplation; the final virtuous action is to dedicate the merits to all beings and to make the invocation; these are called the three sacred actions, the initial, middle and final *Dharmas*, with which one should always govern every practice.

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With these the practice is complete, and one trains, learns and integrates the practice in one's own condition. One needs to try to bring it about that all the practices and the experiences manifest in the condition of one's own state. The virtuous *Dharma*, that is to say the dedications and the invocations, depends on the intentions of the practitioner. Even if one does not know how to express it in words, it is important that the intention to dedicate the merits accumulated for the benefit of all beings is never lacking. This is very important. To authenticate and make the dedication and the invocation more concrete, one uses the *mantra*:

"OM DHARE DHARE BHANDARE SVA HA
DZA YA DZA YA SIDDHI SIDDHI PHA LA PHA LA A A HA SHA SA MA
MA MA KO LING SA MA NTA"

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The Masters of the past have always recited this *mantra* of authentication; it is very important and brings great benefit. Those who are on the Path and who have received instructions and teachings should try on the basis of this to apply the practice as much as possible according to their own capacities and possibilities, and according to the circumstances of time and place. Gradually the root practice of the Foundation Level (Base) will integrate into one's own condition. The different experiences of the Path will really manifest, if the practitioner tries concretely to have these manifestations. For those who enter into the Path of the *Ati rDzogs pa Chen po*, into the *Ati rDzogs pa chen po* Teaching, this is indispensable, it is like a secondary cause; for this reason it is called 'the Foundation of the Teaching'.

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I offer this precious key of the Path of Self-Liberation as a gift to you who are on the Path. With it open the door to the *Ati Yoga* well, and invite all sentient beings as guests.

The *Dharma* (Teaching) that is to be learned is wide and vast, and cannot be represented by just this one text, in the same way that the vast number of flowers that grow in the summer cannot be represented by a single bunch;

yet through the power of my good intention, just as a little spark accompanied by a good secondary cause can cover a whole mountain with flames, so it is possible that this Foundation Level (Base) may become something good for the Teaching and for all beings.

It is for this reason that the words of the sacred Masters which are like drops of nectar have been collected and brought together in the good Precious Vase prepared by Longchen Rolpai Dorje.

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Through this little light of my good intention may the flowers of wisdom of all those who are on the path blossom. Making the nectar of provisional and definitive benefit flow to satisfy the desires of all beings, may the primordial *rDzogs chen* Teaching spread through the merit of this, and develop to the very end of existence becoming a support for all beings. May those who follow it be self-liberated in the state of Samantabhadra.

MA MA KO LING SA MAN TA.

I, Chos rgyal Namkhai Norbu, also called Longchen Rolpai Dorje, gathered together these words of various important Masters, and have written and finished this text for those who follow me and who have faith in me, for those who desire to follow me, and for the people of the *rDzogs chen* Community,

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in the Iron Sheep year, on the seventeenth day of the month governed by the *rgyal* constellation, in central Italy, at the foot of Monte Amiata, close to the seat of the *rDzogs chen* Community, Merigar, in my retreat house, 'Dimension of Light'. Good luck to all!

SARBA DAKALYAM DHAWANTU.

NOTES

¹ Secret formulas, worldly: Rongzom's Commentary states:

"Worldly secret formula are *mantras* which do not lead to liberation, but which are used to accomplish worldly actions".

² Rongzom's Commentary explains the View according to which there is no cause but only a fruit (or effect) as follows:

"Some schools, to confirm their own particular way of seeing, make the following affirmation:

'A cow is its own cause, the cause of its own kind. The trunk of a tree is the basis for its leaves and branches; water is the basis of its own crystalline quality. None of these phenomena are caused by something else, but come about by themselves.' This is called 'the nature which does not depend on cause and effect'".

Form is not produced by the mind, nor is it materialized (from something else). Form and diversity, immutability and immortality do not differentiate themselves. This nature is not a cause which produces an object as an effect (a fruit). All material things, both mobile and immobile, are (themselves) this nature. The increasing and diminishing of all one sees, the cause and the effect (fruit) linked to the impermanence of its own moment and to its own nature, are not different conditions, in just the same way that when gold is covered with mercury, even though it changes colour, it doesn't change in its actual nature.

This theory is called the theory of the single Self, according to which all that appears is solidly real (lit: concrete) and has existed from the very beginning.

There is no cause that creates, but the fruit exists (of itself). Someone might ask: "How can an effect (literally: a fruit) exist without a cause?" They reply: 'In the same way that the sky exists (of itself) right from the beginning, what exists isn't an effect (fruit) of some prior existing thing (literally: of what exists)'".

³ With regard to the way of interpreting the principle of cause and effect in a contrary manner, Rongzom's Commentary states:

"Those who consider *Ishvara* as the cause affirm:

'*Ishvara* gives salvation in the higher states and protects from danger. *Ishvara* is an eternal being who exists from the beginning, who has manifested all mobile and immobile things, who dominates everything. *Ishvara* is immortal, the manifestation is impermanent'. To satisfy *Ishvara* they sacrifice many animals with fire, and through this non-virtuous action try to gain the happiness of the higher states. This is the wrong (contrary) way of conceiving of the principle of cause and effect'.

⁴ With regard to the View which holds that a cause exists but not a fruit, Rongzom's Commentary states:

"Those who hold the View that the cause is the creator affirm: 'The Self is immortal, (while) the mind changes; just as when a cage breaks and the birds fly away, so too in relation to the material body which has been produced there is an immortal Self the size of a thumb or a grain. It is this immortal Self that takes a physical body. All beings possess a creator Self, that is unchanging, free and immortal; beings, or individuals, are called by different names according to the size of their physical body. The Self can be larger or smaller and can pass from one body to another'; some define it as (being like) a clear crystal, others as (being like) an individual who possesses infinite light; the *Vedas* affirm that in accordance with the physical body there are also beings who are born miraculously. There are also the following three characteristics in this regard:

'The Self, which is immortal, is the sole cause and the action carried out with the aggregate is the fruit; (the immortal Self is) the essence of the fruit which is not impermanent but changing. This fruit is produced once only. The Self does not have the potentiality to be able to produce again subsequently; thus there is no continuation'".

- 5 The three *bslab pa* or trainings, are: the training in morality, the training in contemplation, and the training in *Prajna*. They are the indispensable basis of the *Mahayana*, the vehicle of the *Bodhisattva*.
- 6 With regard to the concept according to which liberation and the four elements have the same basis, the *Yid bzin mdzod* states:
 "Earth, water, fire, and air are considered to be absolutely existent.
 The mind is (considered to be) the energy of the body, the nature (or essence) of the energy of the body, the clarity (literally: clear) aspect of materiality. Thus both body and mind are produced simultaneously. The mind is (considered to be) part of the material body: when the body is happy or suffers, the same happens to the mind; just as with illusory attachment the body develops or diminishes, thus too the mind develops and diminishes. If one uses weapons this also provokes pain in the mind".
- 7 *Khyad par 'phags bstod* is the title of a text of praise of Buddha Shakyamuni written by an Indian Master called mTho btsun grub rje.
- 8 *Rin chen rgya mtsho*: probably the title of an important text belonging to the *Anuttaratantra*.
- 9 *rTse mo Byung rGyal*: a *lung* of the rDzogs chen Sems de, belonging to the 'five first texts translated' by Vairocana.
- 10 *Chos kyi me long*.
- 11 *Lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo* (*Lankavatarasutra*): '*Phags pa lang kar gshegs pa theg pa chen po'i mdo*', in nine sections and twenty eight chapters, translated from the Chinese by lotsawa 'Gos Chos 'grub.
- 12 *rGya cher rol pa* (*Lalitavistara*): '*Phags pa rgya che rol pa*', in eighteen sections and twenty seven chapters, translated by lotsawa Ye she de.
- 13 *mDo dran pa nyer bzbag*: '*Phags pa dam pa'i chos dran pa nye bar bzbag pa'i mdo*', in thirty six thousand *slokas*, translated by lotsawa Tshul khirims rgyal mtshan.
- 14 '*Dul ba lung*: '*Dul ba lun sde bzhi*.
- 15 *rGyal po gsal rgyal la gdams pa'i mdo*: also known as '*Phags pa rgyal po la gdams pa* (*Rajavavataka*)', translated by lotsawa Ye she de.
- 16 *sDudpa*: *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i bsdus don gyi tshigs su bcad pa sdud pa*, (belonging to the *Prajnaparamitasutras*), in a section and a half, translated by Bande dPal brtsegs.
- 17 *sPyi mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa*: *Sangs rgyas kyi dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo chen po*, in seventy five chapters and ten sections, translated from the language of the Bru sha (Gilgit) by lotsawa Che btsan skyes.
- 18 The three *Pitakas* are: *Vinaya*, *Sutra*, and *Abidharma*.
- 19 The four series of *Tantras* consist of the three lower *Tantras* - *Kriyatantra*, *Caryatantra*, and *Yogatantra* - and of the *Anuttaratantra*, the higher *Tantra*.
- 20 The eight worldly *dharma*s are: gain and loss, pleasure and displeasure, praise and blame, happiness and suffering.

- 21 *Ras chod gzu lun*: *Ras chod* means not to give any consideration to something, to despise, or scorn; *gzu lun* means to imagine or create something without basis.
- 22 *Lung*: in this case refers to the *lung* of the *rDzogs chen* Sems De, *Byang chub sems rtsal chen sprugs pa*.
- 23 *sDong po bkod pa* (*Gandavyūhasūtra*): the forty fifth chapter of the *Sangs rgyas phal po che* (*Avatamsakasūtra*), in eight sections, translated by lotsawa Bande Ye shes sde and other translators.
- 24 *Phal po che* (*Avatamsakasūtra*): *Shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo sde sangs rgyal phal po che*, in one hundred and sixteen sections, translated by lotsawa Bande Ye she sde and other translators.
- 25 *Zla dga'*: a person who likes to go of in search of amorous or romantic adventures.
- 26 *Do ha mdzod*: although this quotation does not come from the famous *do ha mdzod brgyad*, it could be found in other *Do ha*.
- 27 *Grol ba'i thig le*: *Grol tig dgongs pa rang grol, gter ma* of *phrang po gter ston* Shes rab 'od zer.
- 28 *Sbyor ba bzhi ldan*: a particular method of *pranayama* that has four phases: 1) inhaling 2) holding 3) exhaling or directed holding (*gzil ba*) 4) empty holding after having applied the directed holding.
- 29 *'Khor lo bzhi* (four *chakras*): the *chakra* of great bliss at the top of the head, the *chakra* of enjoyment at the throat, the *chakra* of the *dharmā* at the heart, and the *chakra* of emanation at the navel.
- 30 *dPal bsam yas pa*: the 'Glorious One of bSam yas', a name applied to Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer.
- 31 *Zhal gdams nor bu'i phreng ba*: a *gter ma* containing advice of Padmasambhava.
- 32 *Mi dge ba bcu*: the ten negative actions, see the chapter on morality.
- 33 *Rin chen phreng ba* (*Ratnavali*): a *Madhyamika* text written by Nagarjuna.
- 34 *Khams gong ma'i lha*, divinities of the higher *Khams*. In the formless world there exist four types of divinities: *Nam mkha' mtha' yas*, infinite heaven (or sky); *rNam shes mtha' yas*, infinite consciousness; *Ci yang med*, there is not anything at all; and *Srid rtsed*, supreme peak of existence. These four levels of divinity have as a form only a pure and clear mind without a gross physical body.
- 35 The seven precious or regal attributes are: the wheel, the precious jewel, the precious queen, the precious minister, the precious elephant, the precious horse, and the precious commander.
- 36 The seven higher riches of the *Bodhisattva* are: the riches of faith, the riches of morality, the riches of study, the riches of generosity, the riches of restraint, the riches of a sense of modesty, and the riches of *Prajna*.
- 37 *Yontan mdzod*: *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod dga' ba'i chab*, in thirteen chapters, written by Rang byung rdo rje mKhyen brtse'i 'od zer, otherwise known as 'Jig med gling pa.

- 38 *Jam 'dpal zhing bkod*: four chapters contained in the *dKon mchog brtsegs pa'i mdo* (*Ratnakutasutra*), belonging to the last spread of the teachings by the Buddha, and translated by lotsawa Ye shes sde.
- 39 The Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the Path to the cessation of suffering.
- 40 *bsNyen gnas*: not to kill; not to steal; not to engage in sexual misconduct; not to lie; not to take intoxicating substances; not to sit in a high place - that is to say not to feel pride, not to feel superior; not to sing and dance; not to eat in the afternoon; these are the eight types of vows which one can take and keep for a day.
- 41 *Grub mtha' chen po bzhi*: in India, the two *Hinayana* philosophical traditions *Bye brag smra ba* (*Vaibhasika*), and *mDo sde pa* (*Sautrantika*); and the two *Mahayana* traditions *Sems tsam pa* (*Cittamatra* or *Yogacara*), and *dBu ma pa* (*Madhyamika*). In Tibet, the four schools, the *dGe lugs*, *bKa' rgyud*, *Sa skya*, and *rNying ma*.
- 42 *Drin lan bsab pa'i mdo*: *Thabs la mkhas pa chen po'i sangs rgys kyi drin lan bsab pa'i mdo*, in ??(not in text) and a half sections and nine chapters, translated by lotsawa Bande Chos grub rgya nag.
- 43 *Drin ma med pa'i mdo* (*Vimalakirtinirdesasutra*): *'Phags pa dri ma med par grags pas bstan pa'i mdo*, in ten sections and twelve chapters, translated by lotsawa Bande chos grub rgya nag.
- 44 *Phar Phyin bsDus pa*: also known as *sDud pa* or *mDo sdud pa* (belonging to the *Prajnaparamitasutra*), in a section and a half, translated by Pal brtsegs.
- 45 *Nyi ma'i snying po'i mdo*: *'Phags pa nyi ma'i snying po*, in thirteen sections and twelve chapters, translated by lotsawa Bande bZang skyong.
- 46 *dPal mgon bdun cu rtsa lnga*: seventy five emanations of the glorious protector Mahakala Maning (neutral) who carry out benefits for beings.
- 47 *rNal 'byor grub pa'i lung* = *sPyi mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa*, see note 17.
- 48 The four non-virtuous actions of the voice are: lying, slandering, swearing, insulting, and speaking in a senseless manner.
- 49 *Chos yang dag par sdud pa'i mdo* (*Dharmasangitisutra*): *'Phags pa chos thams cad yang dag par sdud pa zhes bya ba'i mdo*, in seven sections and twelve chapters, translated by Bande Ye she sde.
- 50 *Chu sbyin*: the offering of water for the the *yi dwags* spirits (*pretas*), empowered with *mantra*.
- 51 *dKar dmar gyi sur*: offerings of the smoke of burnt food, called 'white' when barley flour and butter etc. are used to offer to the *Bardo* beings and to the *Dri Za*; called 'red' when meat, blood, and so on are used to offer to hostile beings such as *dGegs*, and other karmic enemies to whom we owe karmic debts going back to past lives.
- 52 "Don't commit any negative actions...", see the section dedicated to the ascetic disciplines of the *Sravakas*.
- 53 *Blo gros mi zad pa* (*Aksayamatipariprocchasutra*): *'Phags pa blo gros mi zad pas bstan oa zhes bya ba'i mdo*, in seven sections, translated by lotsawa Bande Dharmatashila.

54 *rDorje'i gad mo bcu gnyis*, *The Twelve Vajra Laughs: the Upadesa Tantra Rin chen sPungs pa* states:

"The essence of the *Vajra* of the voice of all the Buddhas, look, observe self-originated wisdom: it is beyond the View and the Meditation, beyond virtuous actions and non-virtuous actions. How wonderful! It has never strayed from the primordial condition. Whatever action carried out by the body or the voice does not either bring benefits or disturbances, it beyond all this, ha! ha!" There are in all twelve types of examples like this.

55 An example of the eight words of wonder, taken from the *Rin chen sPungs pa* is the following:

"EMAHO! (Wonderful) Essence of the *Vajra* of the Voice, listen! The condition of someone who has killed thousands and thousands of beings and that of someone who has on the other hand applied the Ten *Paramitas* is not different in the state of *Rig pa*, which is beyond birth and death".

56 *Kun mkhyen chen po*: a name given to Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri me 'od zer.

57 *bShes spring (Suhrllekha)*: advice contained in a letter written by Nagarjuna to his own father, the King bDe spyod bzang po.

58 *Kim pa'i 'bras*: the *kim pa ka* is a sweet tasting fruit that looks nice, but is deadly poisonous.

59 *Zla ba sgron ma'i mdo*: *Candrapradispasutra*.

60 The seven characteristics of the position of Vairocana are described in the *Yantra Yoga* text the *Nyi zla kha shyor*, and in the related commentary, the *Norbu'i Melong*, as follows:

"The legs are crossed in the position of the lotus; the hands rest on the knees; the tongue touches the palate; the eyes, the lips and the teeth are relaxed in their positions; the back must be straight, from the nose down to the navel; the upper part of the body, and the shoulders must be open and spread apart; all the parts of the body are controlled and at the same time relaxed".

This position is not only used in *Yantra Yoga*, but it is always necessary to use it when practising.

61 *Phyi yul lnga*: the five objects of the senses: form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

62 *'Byung ba chen po bzhi' rdul*: the atoms of the elements earth, water, fire, and air.

63 The twelve links of interdependent causation (*rtan 'brel yan lag bcu gnyis*) are: ignorance (*ma rig pa*); volitional formations (perception) (*'du byed*); consciousness (*rnam shes*); name and form (*ming gzugs*); the organs of the senses (*skye mched*); contact (*reg pa*); sensation (*tshor ba*); desire (*sred pa*); grasping (*len pa*); conception (*srid pa*); birth (*skye ba*), old age and death (*rga shi*).

64 The ten *paramitas* or perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa bcu*) are: generosity (*shyin pa*); morality (*tsbul khrims*); patience (*bzod pa*); perseverance (*brtson 'grus*); meditative concentration (*bsam gtan*); discriminating wisdom (*shes rab*; *Prajna*); method (*thabs*); effort (*stobs*); aspiration (*smon lam*); primordial wisdom (*ye shes*).

65 With regard to the Four *Pitakas* the *Shes bya kun khyab* states:
"The Indian Master Sraddhakarawarma explains that the *Pitaka* of the *Rig 'dzin* does not belong to the *Tripitaka*, but to another *Pitaka*, that of the *Bodhisattvas*. The three vehicles - external, internal, and secret - maintain all the *Dharmas*".

The Master Buddhaghaya (Sangs rgyas gSang ba) said:

"The Buddha taught the *Sutras*, the *Vinaya*, the *Abhidhamakosha*, and the *Pitaka* of the *Rig 'dzin*. The *Tantras* are superior to the *Sutra Pitaka*. One can attain the realization of the *Rig 'dzin* even in this lifetime, through the profound and vast method called the *Pitaka* of the *Rig 'dzin*, which is the Fourth *Pitaka*".

66 *Tshul gsum sgron me*: written by mTho btsun Tripitakama, and translated by lotsawa Rin chen bzang po.

67 *Dam tshig gsum bkod*: *dam tshig gsum bkod pa'i rgyal po'i rgyud*, in nineteen chapters, translated by lotsawa Tshul khriims rgyal ba.

68 *rNam snang mngon sbyang*: *rNam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par byang chub pa mam par sprul pa byin gyis rlabs pa shin tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i rgyal po*, in twenty seven sections, translated by dPal brtsegs.

69 *De nyid 'dus pa*: *De nyid bsdu pa'i cha mthun gyi rgyud dPal mchog dang po zhes bya ba*, translated by lotsawa Rin chen bzang po.

70 *Dur khrod rmad du byung pa*: a *Tantra* belonging to the *Anuttarayogatantra* series.

71 *rDorje gur*: *mKha' 'gro ma dra ba rdo rje gur zhes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*, in fifteen chapters, translated by 'Bro g mi lotsawa.

72 *Thabs lam thig le 'ju 'dul*: the phases in which the *thig le* is dissolved by the heat of the *gTum mo*, and thus mastered and made to reabsorb in the (various) seats.

73 *gSang ba 'dus pa (Gubyasamaja)*: *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang chen gsang ba 'dus pa zhes bya ba btag pa'i rgyal po chen po*, in seventeen chapters, translated by lotsawa Ka ba dPal brtsegs.

74 *'Khor lo bde mchog (Chakrasamvara)*: *sNags bla med ma rgyud kyi gsto bor gyur pa'i rgyud chen po bde mchog nyung ngu'i rgyud*, in fifty one chapters, translated by lotsawa Rin chen bzang po.

75 *Dus kyi 'khor lo (Kalachakra)*: *Dus kyi 'khor lo'i rtsa ba'i rgyud stong phrag bcus gnyis pa las phyung ba'i dum bu dbang mdor bstan pa*, translated by 'Bro shes rab grags.

76 With regard to the contemplation which has the four *De Nyid* (or conditions) one reads that:

"In some *Ubhaya Tantras* it is said that with the *Mudra* of distinction one make the *Dam tshig Sems dpa* (the manifestation of commitment) appear, and after this has been re-absorbed by the wisdom manifestation (*ye shes sems spa*) one meditates on their non-duality. The four *De Nyid* are: the non-duality of the divinity and of oneself, the central syllable, and the *mantra* that is recited.

77 *sGyu 'phrul gSang ba snying po (Gubhyagarbha)*: *gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*, in twenty two chapters, translated by gNyags Jnanakumara and rMa Rin chen Mchog.

78 *Kun bzhang rigs lnga'i dbang* (the initiation of the five families of Samantabhadra): the *dbang* called *Don gsal sgron me* belonging to the *mKha' 'gros snying thig*, one of the four *sNying thig (yah bzhi)*; or the initiation of the *dbang gi spyi don snying po don gsal* belonging to the *Klong chen snying thig*.

- 79 'Od gsal rdo rje gsang mdzod: a dgongs gter of A 'Dzoms 'brug chen 'Gro 'dul dpa' bo rdo rje.
- 80 *Spyod lam nam bzhi* (the four activities): walking, sitting, sleeping, and eating.
- 81 The five aggregates are: form (*gzugs*), feeling (*tshor ba*), concept ('*du shes*), volitional formations ('*du byed*), consciousness (*nam shes*).
- 82 The eighteen elements - *khams* or *dhātu* - include the ten *khams* of form (the five senses and the objects of the senses), the seven consciousnesses (the five sense consciousnesses, the consciousness of the mind, and the *dhātu* of the mind), and the *dhātu* of the *dharma*s.
- 83 The twelve *ayatana*, *skye mched*, include the five senses, the mind and its respective objects.
- 84 *rDzog pa'i sangs rgyas lnga*: the Buddhas of the five families, or Aksobhya, Vairocana, Ratnasambava, Amitabha, and Amogasiddhi.
- 85 *bDe bar gshegs pa yab yum bcu*: the ten *Sugata* fathers and mothers, the five Buddhas mentioned in the preceding note, plus their consorts dBying phyug ma, sPyan ma, Mamaki, Gos dkar mo, and Dam tshig sGrol ma.
- 86 *Chen po lnga*: the five great (elements) earth, water, fire, air, and space.
- 87 *rNam par shes pa bzhi*: the four consciousnesses of sight, hearing, smell, and taste.
- 88 The four *Bodhisattvas* are: Ksitigarbha (Tibetan: sa snying), Vajrapani (Phyag rdor), Akasagarbha (Nam snying), and Avalokitesvara (sPyan ras gzigs).
- 89 *Yul bzhi*: the four objects of the senses: form, sound, smell, and taste.
- 90 *Lha mo bzhi*: the four goddesses, Lasyema, Girtima, Malema, Nirtima.
- 91 *dBang po bzhi*: the four sense organs, the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the tongue.
- 92 *Dus bzhi*: the four times: past, present, future, and indetermined time (*ma byon pa 'byung bar nges pa*). Or the four seasons, spring, summer, autumn and winter.
- 93 *Lha mo bzhi*: the four goddesses who represent the purified aspect of the four times: bDud pa ma, Me tog ma, Mar me ma, Dri chab ma.
- 94 *Khro bo bzhi* (the four wrathful ones) bDud rtsi 'khil ba, rTa mgrin, sTobs po che, and gShin rhe'i gshed.
- 95 *rTad chad mu bzhi* (the four limits of eternalism and nihilism):
1) it is not eternal, because the aggregates are impermanent. 2) it is not non-existent, because it has the nature of suffering. 3) it is not something that has an independent existence or a separate 'self', because it has no self. 4) It has no character in itself, because it is void.
- 96 *Khro mo bzhi* (the four Wrathful Ones): lCags kyu ma, Zhags pa ma, lCags sgrog ma, Dril bu ma.
- 97 *Ye shes lnga* (the five wisdoms) are: the wisdom of the essential condition of existence or *dharmadatu* (*chos dbyings ye shes*); mirror-like wisdom (*me long ye shes*); the wisdom of equanimity, or sameness (*myam nyid ye shes*); discriminating wisdom (*sor rtogs ye shes*); and the all-accomplishing wisdom (*bye grub ye shes*).

- 98 *Chos gsum* (the Three Dharmas): in this context one must understand this as the senses, consciousness, and the object.
- 99 *Khams gsum rnam rgyal gyi rtogs pa*: *Khro bo khams gsum rnam par rgyal ba shintu gsang ba'i rtsa ba'i rgyud*, translated by gNubs Nam mkha'ui snying po.
- 100 *sGrib pa rnam gnyis*: the two obstacles of the passions and of concepts.
- 101 *sMan lnga*: the five medicines: *sle tres*, *rgy mtsho'i lbu ba*, *kandakari*, *dbang po lag pa*, *shu dag dkar po*.
- 102 The five nectars are: mucous, urine, male seed, and menstrual blood.
- 103 *bDud rnam bzhi*: the four demons: the demon of the physical body, the demon of the passions, the demon of the lord of death, and the demon of the son of the divinities.
- 104 *rDorje'i bzlas pa*: the reciting of the *Vajra* includes the three phases of inhaling, holding, and exhalation, linked respectively to the sounds of the three syllables OM, A, and HUM.
- 105 *sDe brgyad*: the eight classes: lHa, gShin rje, Ma mo, bDud, bTsan, rGyal bsren, Srin po, and Klu.
- 106 *bsTan bu*: the *Tantra* of the *rDzogs chen Upadesha* series called *rGyal ba rdo rje sems dpa'i dgongs pa bstan pa thams cad kyi bu gcig pa*, in eight chapters.
- 107 *rTsa rgyud*: the root *Tantra sGra thal 'gyur*.
- 108 *'Das rjes*: the *Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes dang po dang gnyis pa gsum pa*, in three sections contained in the *Upadesa* series in texts like the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, etc.
- 109 *dBang nye bar rtogs pa*: probably the title of a *tantra* belonging to the *Anuttarayogatantra* series.
- 110 *rTsa gtso bo gsum*: the three principal channels, *dbu ma*, *ro ma*, and *rkyang ma*.
- 111 *'Khor lo lnga* (the five *chakras*): the four *chakras* mentioned in note 29 plus the 'bliss sustaining *chakra*' (*bde skyong*), at the secret place.
- 112 *rGyud klong sal*: *Klong sal 'bar ba nyi ma'i gsang rgyud las don rgyud le'u bco brgyad*, in eighteen chapters, attributed to Padmasambhava, and written down by Ye shes mtsho rgyal, a *gter ma* of Ratna Glingpa.
- 113 *Dam tshig chen po'i mdo*: *De bzhin gshegs pa'i dpal gyi dam tshig ces bya ba'i mdo*, in three sections and four chapters, translated by Bande dPal brtsegs.
- 114 *So sor thar pa'i mdo* (*Pratimokṣasūtra*): the two *Pratimokṣasūtras* belonging to the first spread of the Teaching by the Buddha, translated by Bande Klu'i rgyal mtshan.
- 115 *'Dod pa'i yon tan lnga*: the five objects of enjoyment: form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- 116 *sDom pa Nyi shupa* (*Samvaravimsaka*): a work in twenty verses which illustrates the contents of the practices of the training of the *Bodhisattva*.
- 117 *Chags sdang lnga*: the five passions: attachment, aversion, mental obscuration, pride, and jealousy.

- 118 *rGyan gyi rgyu lnga* (the five ornamental causes): the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and space.
- 119 *rDorje sNying po rgyan gyi rgyud*: in seventeen chapters, translated by lotsawa lHa Ye she rgyal mtshan.
- 120 The five dimensions are the *Nirmanakaya*, the *Sambhogakaya*, the *Dharmakaya*, the Dimension of the Essential Nature, and the Dimension of the *Vajra*.
- 121 *Phyogs bcu mun sek dPal gsang ba snying po de kbo na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi 'grel pa phyogs bcu'i mun pa thams cad rnam par sel ba*, a commentary to the *Gubiyagarbha* by Kun mkhyen Klong chen pa rDo rje gzi brjid.
- 122 *gTsang tik: gSang ba snying po'i rgyud kyi 'grel pa*, a commentary to the *Gubiyagarbha* written by gTsang ston rDo rje rgyal mtshan.
- 123 *mTshan brjod (Manjusrinamasangiti): 'Phags pa 'Jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa*, in fourteen chapters, translated by lotsawa Rin chen bzang po.
- 124 *'Grel chen dri me 'od: bsDus rgyud dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel bshad rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi rjes su 'jug pa stong phrag bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa'i 'od*, a commentary to the *Kalachakra*, attributed to 'Phags pa sPyan ras gzigs.
- 125 *Rigs drug*: the six karmic dimensions of existence in *Samsara*: the three higher realms of the gods, the semi-gods, and the human beings; and the three lower realms of animals, the hungry ghosts, and the hell beings.
- 126 *'Khor gsum*: the three considerations of the one who offers, the object offered, and the one to whom the offering is made.
- 127 *De nyid rnam bzhi'i rlung sbyor*: the *pranayama* with four characteristics. From the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*:
 "Inhale through the right nostril in an indirect way,
 do a directed open hold, and then contract,
 these four characteristic conditions must be practised, gradually or all at once.
 At the end exhale through the left nostril.
- 128 *sByor ba bzhi ldan gyi rlung sbyor*: the *pranayama* of the four applications. From the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*:
 "The method of breathing is based on cycles of four.
 For a count of four one inhales, one holds, one exhales, and one remains empty;
 then for a count of four one inhales, for a count of six one holds, and for a count of four one exhales and remains empty.
 Then one inhales for a count of four, holds for a count of eight, etc.
 Until the time of the holding becomes double the time of exhalation plus the time holding empty, increase each time by a count of two, while the exhalation and the empty holding should remain the same".
- 129 *gSang rlung dbu mar 'jug pa'i rlung sbyor*: the *pranayama* which makes the secret *prana* enter the central channel. From the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*:
 "The position (of the legs) is that of the lotus, with the hands holding the sides of the body (at the waist) with the thumbs pointed forward and the chest relaxedly stretched: the position of Humchen Kara. The method of concentration: one's own body is a pure and clear dimension, and at the centre of this inseparability of voidness and clarity, there is the central channel which has six characteristics, and at the navel one visualizes a blue luminous Hum. Then one should expand the central channel together with the Hum, until it reaches the size of the whole body, then the size of one's own room, the size of mountains, of the ocean, and so on, until it is as big as the universe. In this way the remains of one's karmic vision are

purified in the real condition. Then, reduce the size of the visualized central channel with the Hum, reducing it more and more, and train in this way in the expansion and re-absorption always maintaining concentration on the Hum.

The method of breathing: inhale the karmic *prana* slowly and deeply through the two paths, the *ro ma* and the *rkyang ma*; with a small holding, make it enter forcefully into the central channel, and holding the sides of the body (at the waist) tightly, 'pull' by means of the energy of the Hum. Emitting the vibration of the sound Hum from the nostrils, the lips, and the teeth, one's internal and external karmic vision and all one's psychic residues will dissolve into the purity and clarity of the universe like the Hum. Thus, perfecting oneself in the expansion and the re-absorption of the Hum inhaling, holding and emitting the sound Hum, the karmic *prana* will penetrate completely into the central channel and one's illusory vision will manifest as original wisdom".

130 *Yan lag bdun ldan gyi rlung sbyor*: the *pranayama* which has seven elements. From the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*:

"In the position of the lotus, with the fists placed on the thighs, tied with a meditation belt, straighten the spine, the trunk of the body, and the arms. The concentration: visualize the three channels and at the centre of the *chakras* the spheres of the purity of the five elements. The method of breathing: inhale slowly and directly, balance the left and the right (energies) and push energetically. Put the two *pranas* of the *ro ma* and the *rkyang ma* into the central channel, keep the sides of the torso stretched tight and hold in a closed manner below the navel. Pushing down the higher *prana* and at the same time pulling up from below, (the *prana*) flowing in the path of wisdom of the central channel will flow into the *chakras* of the heart, of the throat, and the crown of the head, where the spheres of the elements are situated. Exhale rapidly, with a 'Ha', pull in the sides of the torso, and 'plant' the central channel. 'Pulling' ('*dren*') one develops the sensation of pleasure, the heat, and the experiences of the practice".

131 *sByor ba drug pa'i rlung sbyor*: the *pranayama* of the six applications. From the *Nyi zla kha sbyor*:

"The method of the body is: with the knees raised up, the spine straight, the hands in *Vajra* fists placed on the knees, and the gaze fixed: this is the position of Sri Singha. The method of concentration: visualize a blue Hum at the navel, or else a sphere of *prana*. The method of breathing: with the knuckle of the index finger of the left hand block the left nostril and close the glottis; with the fierce sound 'Har' inhale completely and roll the right arm and shoulder towards the right and then forward. Pushing forcefully down place the fists firmly in the secret place. Carrying out the closed hold, straighten the trunk of the body and arch the thorax. Pull forcefully from below, lift the backside, and straighten the arms. With the sound 'Ha', carry out a '*bebs*' (fall) and make the karmic *prana* flow into the Hum. With the backside on the ground, with the fists lift the feet straight up. In the same way inhale through the left side, and twist oneself to the left; inhale then through both nostrils, and rolling the shoulders and the arms, imprison the karmic *prana* in the dimension of the *dbyings*."